בס"ד

MA'AMARIM OF THE REBBE

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BASI L'GANI

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INTRODUCTION

MA'AMAR/DISCOURSE OF REBBE

BASI L'GANI

YUD SHEVAT 5732

INTRODUCTION

The Alter Rebbe once said that one must live with the times. Contrary to the way it sounds, the Alter Rebbe was not advocating following modern trends and changing with the times by adjusting our Judaism to the changing values and mores of society. In fact, the opposite is true. The Alter Rebbe was referring to the times measured by the Torah. One must seek guidance for our lives from the weekly Torah portion. So if this week we are reading about the Egyptian bondage and Exodus, we must learn lessons concerning our own spiritual bondage and the proper path to Redemption, etc.

Chassidim have added another layer to the notion of "living with the times." There is an expression that the Rebbe mentioned repeatedly: "the Chassidic *Parsha*." He was referring to the study of the discourses of the Alter Rebbe on the weekly Torah portions in his seminal works *Torah Or* and *Likkutei Torah*"

In other words, in addition to the lessons gleaned from the actual narratives and laws of the Torah, we must also glean deeper insights from the wellsprings of Chassidus on those Biblical texts, as they correspond to that particular week.

But the Jewish cycle of time is measured yet another way. In addition to the weekly Torah readings, our year is seasoned with Holidays. We must obviously live with the messages of those Holidays, particularly as they are viewed through the lenses of *Chassidus*.

One may add that there are certain seasonal discourses that Chassidim "lived with" with extraordinary devotion. One such discourse—or series of discourses—is *Basi L'gani.*

The Previous Rebbe issued a discourse entitled *Basi L'Gani* to be studied on the tenth day of Shevat in the year 5710-1950, which was the yahrtzeit of his grandmother, the *Rebbetzin Rivkah*. That day, the Previous Rebbe left us physically as well and, as a result, this discourse became the final Divine message that was channeled through the Rebbe, the leader of that generation, to his followers, and indeed to the entire Jewish nation for posterity.

The Rebbe asked of us to study this discourse and review it publically throughout the day of Yud Shevat and study it in the days that lead to Yud Shevat.

From the year 5711—the first *Hilula* of the Previous Rebbe—onward the Rebbe delivered a *Ma'amar*/Chassidic Discourse with the same title of *Basi L'Gani*. Indeed, the recitation of that discourse was the sign that the Rebbe had finally accepted the role of Rebbe after many months of protesting that he would not assume that position.

Each year the discourse focused and elaborated on one chapter of the Discourse. The original *Ma'amar* (which is actually a series of four discourses) comprises twenty chapters and for twenty years the Rebbe delivered a *Ma'amar* on the chapter that corresponded to that year. In the year 5730, the Rebbe concluded a series of annual *Basi L'gani* discourses, elaborating on the final twentieth chapter. There was some suspense as to what the Rebbe would do the next year.

In the year 5731, the Rebbe started a new series of discourses beginning again with a *Ma'amar* on the first chapter of the original *Ma'amar*. It was a

completely new discourse, not a repetition of the one he said in 5711. This custom continued until—and through—the year 5748, when the Rebbe delivered a discourse on the 18th chapter. For reasons that were not divulged, the Rebbe did not continue this custom for the years beyond 5748. However, he did edit and submit for publication some of the earlier discourses, including the one of 5732. This was one of the last discourses the Rebbe edited for publication for Yud Shevat 5752.

In short, Chassidim were asked to live with—and they did live—with *Basi L'gani* in general and the corresponding chapter in particular. This year 5772 (the fourth cycle) we live with the discourses that the Rebbe said in the years 5712 and 5732.

The following is a free translation of the Rebbe's discourse of 5732. The footnotes that are in the original discourse were also translated. Additional footnotes were added to help clarify some of the concepts in the Ma'amar. Those footnotes use a smaller font and are bracketed to distinguish them from the Rebbe's.

It is my fervent prayer that the study of this *Ma'amar* will hasten the time when we will be

reunited with the *Ba'al Hilulo* and see the awakening of our Rebbe, *Dovid Malka Mashicha*, imminently.

Heschel Greenberg

Rosh Chodesh Shevat, 5772

Buffalo, New York

BS"D

MA'AMAR/DISCOURSE OF REBBE BASI L'GANI

YUD SHEVAT 5732

"I have come into My garden, My sister, My bride" [1]

My sainted father-in-law, the Rebbe, *Ba'al Ha'hilula*[2]—in the discourse issued for his *Histalkus*[3]

[1] *Shir HaShirim* 5, 1.

{The entire book of *Shir Hashirim* is a metaphor that describes the mutual love between G-d and the Jewish people.}

[2] {The word *Hilula* (which means wedding) is used to describe the passing of a Tzadik at which time the soul reunites with its Maker, the phrase *Baal HaHiula* literally means :the master of the wedding;" which, in Chassidic parlance refers to the person whose passing we are observing.}

[3] {Literally: His ascent; a term used for the passing of a righteous person.}

and *Hilula*[4]—cites the Midrash Rabbah's comments on this verse:

The words "My garden" means "My chamber;" to the place where My essence was originally revealed, for the essence of the *Shechinah* (Divine presence) was originally revealed below. And through undesirable behavior (beginning with the Tree of Knowledge) the *Shechinah* departed upward to the seventh heaven.

Afterwards, seven righteous people arose (beginning with our Father Abraham, "Abraham was unique"[5]) and brought the *Shechinah* closer to earth, until Moses arrived, who was the seventh—and "all sevens are beloved"[6]—and brought it down to the earth. This process (of the drawing down and descent of the *Shechinah* below to this earth) was expressed primarily[7] in the *Beis Hamikdash* (The

[4] *Basi l'gani* 5710 (*Sefer Ha'Ma'arim* 5710, p. 111 onward. This discourse was submitted by the *Ba'al HaHilula* for Yud Shevat 5710, the day of his *histalkut*.

[5] Yechezkal 33:24.

[6] *Vayikra Rabbah* 29, 11.

[7] This in contrast to *Mattan Torah* – See below sec. 2.

Holy Temple)[8] as it says,[9] "Make for me a sanctuary and I will dwell in them."

It should be noted that the discussion of the Midrash relates to the time in which the extension of the *Shechinah* below occurred; the essential drawing down of the *Shechinah* to this world occurred on the day the Mishkan was erected. By contrast, the discourse focuses on the location into which the *Shechinah* was extended. The primary extension was in the Mishkan and Mikdash and

[8] The reference to the ***Beis Hamikdash*** here is taken from the original discourse. This is problematic because it would have been more precise to have written either "Mishkan" or just "MIkdash" consistent with the terminology of the Biblical verse. Offhand, it may be suggested that the emphasis on the word ***Beis Hamikdash*** is due to the fact that the Mishkan was only a temporary dwelling place (II *Shmuel* 7:6. *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 1:16 (3), whereas the essential place for the dwelling of the *Shechinah* was in the *Beis Hamikdash*. See below sec. 2 where it is stated that the Mishkan that Moses built empowered the Shechinah to dwell in the *Beis Hamikdash*.

[9] *Terumah* 25, 8.

through which Divine revelation extended to the world at large.[10]

II

The Discourse continues by focusing on the precise use of the term "I will dwell in them" mentioned in the Biblical text. It does not say "I will dwell in it" but rather "in them." This implies that He dwells in each and every member of Israel.[11]

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[10] {The Rebbe is stressing here that the Discourse departs somewhat from the Midrashic source to focus on the **location** of the Divine presence rather than on the **time** it was revealed. This ties in with the general flow of this Discourse (and of Chassidic thought in general) concerning the ultimate purpose of existence to transform the physical world into a dwelling place for G-d. Through the Divine presence in the Mishkan and Mikdash the entire world is affected. And although time and space are interconnected; time is a more ethereal aspect of the physical world than that of space. Therefore making the realm of space more receptive to G-d's presence assumes greater importance in the scheme of realizing His purpose in creation.}

[11] This interpretation is cited in *Likkutei Torah* (beginning of *Parshas Naso* 20, end of side b) attributing it to "Our Sages of blessed memory." See

This also explains the verse "The righteous will inherit the land, and they will dwell on it eternally."[12] The righteous ones cause the dwelling (i.e., the eliciting and "downloading"[13]) of the *Shechinah*, referred to as "eternal," as in the words, "*Shochein Ad*-the One who dwells forever, exalted and holy"[14]—that it should be revealed below.

It may be suggested that the reason the discourse expounds on the verse "the righteous will inherit the land…" after explaining that the primary elicitation was in the Mishkan[15] and after explaining how the

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Reishis Chochma, Shaar HoAhavah, near the beginning of chapter 6 (paragraph beginning with words: *ushnei pesukim* 69b), et al. – referenced in *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 27, p. 414.

[12] *Tehillim* 37, 29.

[13] See *Matnat Kehunah* and *Maharzav* on *Bamidbar Rabbah* 13, 2. *Maharzav* on *Bereishit Rabbah* 19, 7.

[14] So it is cited throughout the entire series of *Hilula* discourses. See discourse s.v. *Basi L'Gani* 5728, n. 27-28 (*Sefer HaMa'amarim Melukat* vol. 2. p. 240)

[15] The question is more pronounced considering that the Midrash explains the Biblical verse **before** it states that the dwelling of the *Shechinah* occurred with the

plural use of "in them" indicates that the *Shechinah* dwells within each and every member of Israel – is to indicate that the phenomenon of the righteous eliciting the *Shechinah* below ("and they will dwell on it forever") is not restricted to the seven righteous people from Abraham to Moses. It applies to each and every Jew, about whom it is said: "Your nation are all righteous."[16] [17]

By employing the plural form "I will dwell in **them**" that refers also to each and every Jew, it thus conveys two messages:

Every Jew is empowered to become a Mishkan and Mikdash for G-d; that the primary manifestation of

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construction of the Mishkan. The discourse changes the order of these two themes.

[16] *Yeshayahu* 60:21.

[17] {Whereas the Midrash discusses the idea of the righteous bringing the Shechinah down below in the context of Moses—who brought the Shechinah down below through the construction of the physical Sanctuary—the Discourse understands that the credit due to the righteous extends to everyone who creates a Sanctuary within himself and through himself to the entire world.}

the *Shechinah* shall dwell in him exactly as it was in the *Beis Hamikdash*—"I will dwell in **them."** It also suggests that through this process, G-dliness is extended to the entire world—"and they will dwell on it (the earth) forever."

Another insight:

The Discourse discusses the foregoing interpretation of the plural "I will dwell in them-within each and every one" in the context of Moses' role in bringing the *Shechinah* down below. This suggests that the power that each individual Jew has to elicit the essence of the *Shechinah* derives from Moses' efforts of bringing the essence of the *Shechinah* down below.

This parallels the process of G-d's descent on Mount Sinai[18] to give us the Torah at which time we were given the power to subsequently reveal G-dliness below. [This is indicated by our Sages' statement[19] that when the Torah was given, the decree that "the upper spheres shall not descend below" was nullified. Nullification of the decree implies that

[18] *Yisro* 19:20.

[19] *Tanchuma, Va'eira* 15. *Shemos Rabbah* 12:3. et al.

from that point onwards the "upper spheres" can descend below.]

The same can be said of the effects of bringing G-dliness below through the Mishkan that Moses constructed. [The advantage of the Mishkan over the giving of the Torah in terms of eliciting G-dliness below[20] is that at *Mattan Torah* the initiative was from above (and was therefore only of a temporary nature), whereas the Mishkan enabled the physical objects out of which it was constructed to become receptacles for the revelation of G-dliness.[21]]

When Moses brought the *Shechinah* down into the Mishkan, thereby allowing the physical objects to become vessels for G-dliness, he created the

[20] See *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5643, p. 222.

[21] {The point made here is that both *Mattan Torah* and the Mishkan share the characteristic of bringing the Shechinah down below. And in both situations, it was Moses who made that happen. However, the construction of the Mishkan was a human act, whereas *Mattan Torah* was a G-dly initiative. In terms of changing the world the former has a more powerful and lasting impact.}

potential for the same dynamic to occur in the *Beis Hamikdash,* as well as in the spiritual Sanctuary within each and every Jew. And just as by drawing the G-dly presence within the Mishkan facilitated its extension to the entire world, the same applies to the effects of the spiritual Sanctuary within each and every Jew. The dwelling of the *Shechinah* within the person ("I will dwell in them") is a channel through which G-dliness is spread to the world at large, leading to the fulfillment of: "And He will dwell forever on **it**."

III

The Discourse continues:

The reason why the essence of the *Shechinah* was originally below is because the very purpose for which G-d created the world was to fulfill His desire to have a dwelling place in the lowest realm.[22] G-d's desire to have a dwelling place in the lowest world, the discourse explains, was that G-dliness shall be revealed below through **our** initiative, specifically

[22] See *Tanchuma, Naso* 16. *Bechukosai* 3. *Bamidbar Rabbah*13. et al.

through *iskafia*-suppressing of evil and *ishapcha*, transformation of evil.[23]

[It may be suggested that the statement in the discourse that the revelation in this world is caused by *iskafia* and *ishapcha* applies also to the **desire** G-d has to have a dwelling place in the lowest world. In other words, G-d's desire to have a dwelling down here in this world entails several points: a) The desire was for G-dliness to dwell in the lowest of worlds; b) that the revelation of G-dliness should not be a unilateral initiative from above but should

[23] {The Rebbe, in an earlier discourse (*Basi L'Gani* 5731, published in *Sefer HaMaamarim Melukat,* Volume 5, p. 153) raises the question: If G-d's purpose was to make His dwelling in our world a product of our efforts, why does the Midrash state that when He created the world the essence of the *Shechinah was* already present in this world? That was prior to any human endeavor? The Rebbe answers: "that the essence f the Shechinah was below at the beginning of creation means that this lowly world was created in such a fashion that His desire became an integral part of creation that gave the world the potential or predisposition that endows our human efforts with the capacity to make the world a dwelling place for G-d's essence, even within the context of our world."}

rather be generated by human effort; c) that the human effort should be *iskafia* and *ishapcha* which involve a human dynamic.][24]

The discourse continues:

The G-dly revelation below that is generated by the service of *iskafia* and *ishapcha* is one that is beyond even having a connection to this world.[25]

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[24] {The terms used here translated literally would yield: "a service that derives from the very concept of lowliness." Perhaps, the Rebbe is distinguishing between human endeavor such as doing a Mitzvah that one enjoys. Although the mitzvah involves human effort, it does not require the human being to struggle with his lowly human traits and alter them as is the case with *iskafia* and *ishapcha*. These approaches do not only involve our work, they come from our "gut."}

[25] {In the original *Basi L'Gani* Discourse there is a discussion of the two modes of G-dly light. One is called *memalle kol almin*-the light that fills and permeates all of the worlds, and the other is called *sovev kol almin*-that which "surrounds" or encompasses all of the worlds. Surrounding and encompassing imply that this light is too intense for any of the worlds to internalize and is as elusive from the highest world as it is from the lowest. However, when we engage in *iskafia* we can even

[This is consistent with the idea mentioned above that through the construction of the Sanctuary the **essence** of the *Shechinah* was revealed below because what is meant by the "essence of the *Shechinah*" is the G-dly light that transcends all of the worlds.[26] Indeed, constructing a Mishkan in the spiritual sense involves *iskafia* and *ishapcha* through which the G-dly light that transcends the worlds is elicited—the essence of the *Shechinah*.]

This is rooted in the saying[27] "When the "other side" is suppressed (*iskafia*), the glory of G-d is revealed in all of the worlds equally." The definition of "in all the worlds" is the G-dly Light that is present in all

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reveal that encompassing light and introduce into our world. This is what it means when it says here, "it is beyond even having a connection to this world." This light normally cannot be accessed because it is utterly beyond even having a remote connection to us, except through the process of *iskafia* and *Ishapcha*}

[26] See, at length, discourse *Basi L'gani* 5111

[27] See *Tanya*, end of chapter 27. *Likkutei Torah* beginning of *Parshas Bechokosei* (based on Zohar 128b. See also there 67b. 184b). *Torah Or, Vayakhel* 89d. *Likkutei Torah, Chukas* 65c.

of the world equally, i.e., the G-dly light that is beyond having a connection to the worlds. And through the service of *iskafia* and *ishapcha* we can elicit[28] this light.

IV

The Discourse, in chapter two (the chapter that relates to this year[29]) continues with the statement that the service of the Mishkan and Mikdash was the service of *iskafia* that leads to *ishapcha*. Thus, one of the services[30] in the Holy Temple was the

[28] The term used for this elicitation is "*istalek*". This word also has the connotation of exaltedness, implying that this revelation is one of exaltedness *(Torah Or* ad loc.*)*

[29] 5732 (the year this discourse was delivered) – is the second year of study of the **second** cycle. This year (5752) we learn this chapter of the series of discourses for the **third** time—See "foreword" of the discourse of the same title 5728 *(Sefer HaMaamarim Melukat*, volume 2p. 238).

[30] It may be suggested that by "**one** of the services" he means one of the unique and essential services in the Mikdash (Note the *Tosphos* s.v. *ad achas – Menachos* 18a.) This is based on the fact that the objective of the *Beis Hamikdash* is to construct: "A house for G-d that is

sacrificial service. Sacrifices constitute *skafia* and *ishapcha,* as will be explained below.

Now there is an obvious connection of this point (that the service of the Mishkan and Mikdash was the service of *iskafia* and *ishapcha*) with the statement at the beginning of the discourse. Inasmuch as the essence of the *Shechinah* was manifested primarily in the Mishkan and Mikdash and since the way to draw the essence of the *Shechinah* below is through the service of *iskafia and ishapcha,* it follows then that the primary service of the Mishkan and Mikdash must be *iskafia* and *ishapcha*.

However, a novel concept has been introduced in chapter two. In the beginning of the Discourse the focus was on the elicitation of the essence of the *Shechinah* below ("And I will dwell in them") through the **construction** of the Mishkan and Mikdash ("Make for Me a Sanctuary"). In this

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fit to offer sacrifices in it." (Rambam, beginning of *Hilchos Beis HaBechirah*) See chapter three of the series of the original discourse, *Basi L'Gani*: "The **primary** service in the Mishkan and Mikdash… the sacrificial service."

chapter, he adds that the elicitation **in** the Mishkan and Mikdash (after it was constructed; which superseded the elicitation engendered by the actual construction of the Mishkan) also resulted from the service of *iskafia* and *ishapcha.* This explains why the primary service in the Mishkan and Mikdash was the sacrificial service—which exemplifies *iskafia* and *ishapcha.*

V

The Discourse continues: "The sacrificial service is a spiritual service of the soul." Proof of this he adduces from the participation of the Kohanim and Leviim with their service and song during the offering of the sacrifice. These are spiritual activities. [As explained in several sources:[31] the flow of G-dly light downward—engendered by the sacrifices—was facilitated by the service of the Kohanim, whereas the elevation of the physical through the

[31] See (addenda) to *Mitteler Rebbe's Bi'urei HaZohar, Vayeitzei* 133a onward. *Tzemach Tzedek's Bi'urei Hazohar* ad loc. p. 102. et al.

sacrifices was a result of the song and music of the Leviim.[32]

[32] This point has also been made in discourse entitled *Basi L'Gani* 5712 (*Sefer Hamamarim Melukat*, volume 1, p. 19) Based on the above it explains neatly why, in citing the proof from the participation of the Kohanim and Leviim, the Discourse states that "this is a spiritual service, rather than saying "it is a spiritual service of the **soul**," or "of the soul of man" (which is the terminology used before and after in the Discourse). This is so because it was the combined effort of the Kohanim and Leviim that was responsible for the downward extension and elevation effects of the actual sacrifices. Thus, the proof from the participation of the Kohanim and Levi'im is restricted to the notion that it is a spiritual service. The proof that there is a parallel spiritual sacrificial service of the soul is from the verse "A person who will offer from **you**."

{The Rebbe's point is that there were two interconnected, but distinct, processes being discussed in the Discourse with regard to sacrifices. First, every sacrifice was not just a gesture of offering something to G-d. A sacrifice caused the generation of spiritual energy in two directions, downward and upward. The downward flow was unleashed by the Kohanim, whose spiritual constitution is *chesed*-kindness, which involves giving and bestowing. Similarly, the sacrifice would

This is consonant with the statement in the Torah:[33] "A person who will offer from you…" At first glance, it should have said, "One of you who will offer." This is a hint to the fact that a sacrifice has to come not just from the literal animal but also from you, yourselves (*foon aych ah'lane*), from the animal within the heart of the person.

It may be suggested that the point made in the Discourse that the sacrificial service is also a spiritual service of the soul [notwithstanding the fact that even the literal sacrificial service is an exercise in *ishapcha,* whereby the animal whose life

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bestow spiritual light on the lowly physical world. Leviim, by contrast, personify the faculty of *gevurah*-judgment that focuses on refining and elevating the world.

There is also a second, related, dynamic discussed in the Discourse. The sacrifice with all of its spiritual effects involved the actual offering of an animal to G-d. There is also an internal offering that parallels the sacrifice that occurs within each and every individual. This is derived from the syntax of the verse that discusses sacrifices as explained in the text.]

[33] *Vayikra* 1:2.

derives from *kelipas nogah*[34] is transformed into an offering to G-d—the very idea of transforming darkness into light] relates to the theme in the beginning of the Discourse. There it states that the verse that employs the plural: "Make for Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in **them**" indicates that the Sanctuary is to be made within each and every Jew.

The corollary of this premise is that the same dynamic that applied to the actual Mishkan applies to the sacrifice of every Jew In the Mishkan and Mikdash, the primary force of elicitation was generated by the sacrificial service[35] [despite the fact that the actual construction of the Mikdash elicited an exceedingly lofty G-dly energy—as is indicated in the verse "Make for Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in them," the word "I" suggesting I Myself—nevertheless the sacrifices elicited an even loftier force].

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[34] *Tanya* chapter 7 in the beginning; beginning of chapter 37, et al.

[35] This is borne out of the fact that the Mikdash is a "House that is fit to offer sacrifices in it." (as mentioned above, f. 22).

The same is true with respect to the Sanctuary within each and every Jew. Even after one has engaged in the service of by making himself into a Sanctuary for G-d ("Make for Me a Sanctuary"), which causes G-d to dwell in them ("I will dwell in them"), one has to perform the service implied by the verse, "A person who will offer from **you."** This will elicit an even loftier energy—the **primary** expression of the concept of "And I will dwell in them."[36]

[36] We can now understand why the Discourse, at the end of the chapter, after expounding on the sacrificial order within the human soul, states: "And this is what is says, 'Make for Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in them.' Within each and every one…"

{The Rebbe here extends the parallel between the personal sanctuary and the literal one. In the actual Mishkan there were two stages: the actual construction of the Mishkan that elicited G-dly light into this world and the subsequent offering of sacrifices that generated even more sublime energy. Similarly, the internal spiritual Sanctuary that we create within ourselves comes in two stages: first the construction of our inner Sanctuary followed by the offering of a *korban*, the idea of *iskafia* and *ishapcha*.}

VI

We can clarify the above by prefacing the statement in the beginning of the Discourse that the service in the Mishkan and Mikdash is the service of ***iskafia*** that leads to *ishapcha.*

Now, in the beginning of the Discourse it states that the service that causes the elicitation of the essence of the *Shechinah* below is the service of both *iskafia* and *ishapcha.* [Although he cites the statement "when the *sitra achara*[37] is suppressed (*iskafia*) it generates the glory of G-d in all the worlds," nevertheless it mentions the two separate approaches of *iskafia* and *ishapcha.* Moreover, the greatest emphasis in the beginning of the Discourse is placed on the virtue of *ishapcha*. When the darkness is **transformed** into light it causes an increased generation of light.]

By contrast, in this chapter (Chapter Two) when discussing the service that was performed in the Mishkan and Mikdash (after its construction) it

[37] {Literally: "The other side". This is Kabbalah terminology for the forces of evil that exist on the other side of holiness.}

states: "the service in the Mishkan and Mikdash is the service of *iskafia* that leads to *ishapcha.*[38]

This matter may be resolved by prefacing one of the explanations given for the preeminent role the sacrifices played in eliciting an even higher G-dly light than that which was elicited by the construction of the Mikdash itself (as was stated above in sec. 5). The explanation is that the construction of the Mikdash exemplified the approach of *ishapcha*.[39] [The person and the world are transformed into G-dly Sanctuaries.] The innovation of the sacrificial service is that it (also) exemplified the idea of *iskafia* as will be explained below. And *iskafia* can elicit an even more exalted

[38] This implies that the essential focus here is on *iskafia.* Note the statement at the end of the chapter: "through his service of *iskafia* and—what is most essential—that which leads to *iskafia.* This implies that he is also discussing the concept of *iskafia* that does not lead to *ishapcha*.

[39] This clarifies why in chapters three and five it mentions only *ishapcha* since the discussion there revolves around the **construction** of the Mishkan.

light than the elicitation that is generated by *ishapcha.*[40]

With this premise we can provide additional clarity as to why the Discourse devotes extensive elaboration of the sacrificial order within the human soul. The **literal** offering of sacrifices exemplifies overtly the idea of *ishapcha*. [The sacrifice involves an animal that derives its sustenance from the forces of *kelipas nogah.* It is then transformed into becoming a sacrifice for G-d.] The *iskafia* element of sacrifices is more pronounced and exemplified in the **spiritual** sacrifice of the person.

To clarify the idea of *iskafia* as it pertains to the sacrificial order, we must preface that the preeminent value of *iskafia* over *ishapcha* is that with *ishapcha* the thing that is transformed remains intact; what changes is its identity as a holy entity. *Iskafia,* by contrast, represents the idea of self-abnegation, where one **breaks out** of his identity.[41]

[40] *Torah Or, Vayakhel* 89c-d. Addenda to *Torah Or,* 114c-d, et al.

[41] Ibid.

This then is the rationale for the premise that the elicitation generated through *iskafia* is more sublime than the elicitation generated through *ishapcha.* When a person breaks out of their mold and reverts to a state of *ayin*-nullity, he arouses and elicits the ultimate *ayin*—that which transcends existence.[42]

We can now understand the connection of sacrifice (including the literal ones) with *iskafia*. A sacrifice involves the elevation from things below to a higher

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{Perhaps the following analogy can be useful in understanding the difference between *ishapcha* and *iskafia:* A private who is promoted to the rank of officer versus a private who is asked to go on a dangerous mission. In the former his identity and role change; there is no need to surrender his life to make that promotion work. in the latter, he must be prepared to give up everything he possesses including his life. The former is an analogy for *ishapcha* and the latter is an analogy for *iskafia*}

[42] Ibid.

{Our ability as finite human beings to nullify our existence is empowered by that aspect of G-d that is considered to be a "nullity" as it were because it is out of bounds of the realm of something-ness; it utterly transcends reality the way we know it.}

state (as will be explained below sec. 8). This process of elevation entails the nullification of the lower level's identity as it becomes absorbed within the higher level. [This is what happens in the actual sacrifice of an animal wherein the animal is burnt, consumed and absorbed within the heavenly fire]. This process—whereby an entity is nullified and reverts to naught—is essentially the idea of *iskafia*.

VII

An additional insight:

This concept [that there is a value to the process of elevation, whereby an independent entity reverts to the state of nullity, that is achieved through sacrifices] is connected to the theme expounded on in the beginning of the discourse. There it stated that the ultimate purpose of creation of all the worlds was for the express purpose of the creation of our lowly world. It is through this process that G-d's purpose of having a dwelling place in the lowest of worlds can be realized.[43]

[43] {The Rebbe will now focus on the role of the higher worlds in the scheme of creation. The Rebbe will demonstrate that although the ultimate purpose of

The explanation of the above:

The creation of our lowly world followed the creation of the higher spiritual worlds through which the physical world was created. Shouldn't G-d have created this world first?

The answer lies in the words "a dwelling place in the lowest realms," which implies that the lowly creations of this physical world become nullified in their subordination to G-d. This occurs when the lower worlds are created via the higher worlds. When these lowly creations realize that their life force was first contained within the higher realms which then descended below with exponential measures of decline it engenders a feeling of *ratzo*, a desire to advance forward and rise higher to become absorbed within their source. This takes them out of the parameters of their existence.

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creation is for the lowliest world to become a dwelling place for G-d, nevertheless, the higher worlds also play an important role in this process; otherwise G-d would not have created them. And their contribution to the process is exemplified by the elevation of the physical and its nullification that occurs with the offering of the sacrifice.}

One may suggest that this concept is alluded to in the principle that "every descent is for the purpose of ascent." The simple explanation of this principle is that the very purpose of the descent is for the subsequent elevation to a level higher than the one that preceded the descent.

One can add another explanation of this principle. The entire process of the progression of worlds [whereby the lowest physical world's creation is preceded by the creation of the higher worlds which then descended level by level (from world to world) until the lowly physical world was created] is to allow for the process of elevation; the *ratzo*-advance and elevation.[44]

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[44] See *Likkutei Torah, Pinchas* 77c (likewise in *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5679 p. 150): "The ultimate goal of the descent is for the purpose of ascent; for the independent entity (the "*yesh-existent* something") reverts to *ayin*-nullity." This process of the *yesh* becoming *ayin* is synonymous with *ratzo*-advance and elevation of that which is below.

{If the creation of the lowliest realms of existence—i.e., our physical world—would have come about by G-d simply decreeing it to exist without the intermediary spiritual world, there would be no way that a lowly

The same dynamic we find with regard to the G-dly light that creates all of existence.[45] The Light was contained with its Luminary. This Light is even beyond having any connection to the worlds [as is known that the infinite Light that precedes the

creature could elevate itself. The creation of the intermediate spiritual worlds that are interlocked with one another and with our physical world, there is room for the person to realize that there is a "beyond." This realization in turn ignites the passion to want to connect with one's source. This desire causes the person to desire shedding their own being to become absorbed within their source. When we reach this state of self-abnegation, we can elicit the ultimate transcendent aspect of G-d. Had there been no spiritual level that was connected to us—which would have been the reality had G-d simply decreed our physical existence, we would not know of our Source and we could never disengage ourselves from our awareness of self.}

[45] Regarding the descent of the Light [the descent of the pre-*Tzimtzum* light where it was subsumed within its source; and likewise the decline that affected the Light after the first *Tzimtzum*] see *Likkutei Torah,* ad loc. *Sefer HaMaaamrim* 5679 ad loc. (p. 179ff), 5688 ad loc. (end of p. 142ff).

tzimtzum[46]—which, in general terms, is referred to as the Light that is contained within the Luminary—leaves no room or basis for the emergence of worlds]. Only after the process of *tzimtzum* (where the entire light was first removed) was a streak of light—the *kav*—extended from the pre-*tzimtzum* infinite light—that relates to the worlds. Subsequently, there were other processes of *tzimtzum* and diminutions of the light until it could become a source of creation of all of existence.

[46] {*Tzimtzum* or contraction is the Arizal's approach to understanding how finite beings can emerge from an infinite G-d. G-d, as it were, withdrew His light to create a vacuum in which a streak of light was then generated from the withdrawn light to give life to all of existence. The metaphor employed for existence in its pre-*Tzimtzum* state is the light of the sun (the "luminary" or source of light) as it is still contained within the orb of the sun itself. In that state, the light is totally nullified and cannot be characterized as light. Only after the process of *tzimtzum* can that light emerge.}

Why couldn't this streak of light that relates to the world be revealed from the very outset?[47]

One of the reasons for this process was to endow the creature with the ability to advance and be elevated to become absorbed within the light that is even beyond having a connection to the world. This provides it with the capacity to experience total self-abnegation and surrender to G-d. [As is well known,[48] the state of nullification that is generated by having the light that is within the worlds revealed to us is only a state of nullification of an independent entity (*Bittul Hayesh*-relative nullification). The genuine state of nullification—*Bittul B'metzius*-absolute and total nullification—derives from the light that is beyond even having a connection to the worlds.][49]

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[47] {Why couldn't G-d simply emanate from Himself a force that is commensurate with the limitations of our world?}

[48] See *Kuntres Etz HaChaim* chapter 6. *Hemshech* 5666, p. 436. Et al.

[49] {The answer to the question as to why there was a need for the light to exist originally within the Divine Source and then undergo various processes of

VIII

To clarify this matter more specifically we must preface how the Torah describes the sacrifices as, "a pleasant fragrance."[50] Our Sages commented:[51] "It is a source of pleasure for Me that I spoke and My will was fulfilled." We must understand. That G-d's will is fulfilled is true about the fulfillment of all the Mitzvos. Yet, this emphasis is mentioned specifically with regard to sacrifices.

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diminution is that if G-d would have simply willed existence out of non-existence and not had that light for creation begin within its Source and subsequently contract downward we would not be able to relate to the infinite light. There would be an unbridgeable chasm between the Infinite light and our existence. That would guarantee the status quo of our finite existence and would undermine G-d's purpose in the creation of the lowly world that it becomes a dwelling place for Him.}

[50] *Vayikra 1:9.*

[51] Rashi ad loc. *Sifri* (cited by Rashi) on *Pinchas* 28:8. See also Rashi, *Tetzaveh* 29:25.

The Alter Rebbe explains[52] this matter by way of introduction. Our Sages state:[53] "Before the world was created only He and His name [existed]." The term "name" here refers to the attribute of *malchus,* the source of the life-flow and the life-force of all of existence.[54] The "name" that preceded creation of the world is the attribute of *malchus* as it is contained within the Infinite One, may He be blessed. In that state it cannot be characterized as an existence just as the light that is contained within the Luminary does not have any defined existence. Subsequently, the light and radiance spread out to infuse life[55] into all of existence, *ex nihilo.*

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[52] *Likkutei Torah, Pinchas ad loc.*

[53] *Pirkei D'R.Eliezer* Chapter 3.

[54] {A name is the instrument through which a person is known to the outside. One does not need a name for oneself. Likewise, the attribute of *Malchus,* which means kingship, is G-d's attribute of projection, where He projects His energy to the outside, i.e., the creation and sustaining of the lower worlds.}

[55] *Likkutei Torah* uses the term "to give life to." One would have thought that when discussing creation "from

nothingness to something" it would have been more appropriate to have employed the term "to create," (as is indeed mentioned subsequently in *LIkkutei Torah* ad loc. itself: "the creation from nothingness to something.").

¦The Rebbe's question is based on the existence of two disparate G-dly forces within creation: The force that is responsible for matter to emerge from absolute nothingness and the life-force that infuses life into that existence. The analogy for these two dynamics is the body that exists and is also infused with a soul. The soul does not create the body; it gives it life. Thus, the question is, why does the Alter Rebbe speak about creation ex nihilo which applies t the act of creation itself, and yet follows it up with the words, "to give life to" which applies to the second force.

The answer, given below, is that the discussion in *Likkutei Torah* revolves around the effects of the descent of the light. There is a greater reaction that we have to the light that gives life when it descends than there is to the light that creates when it descends.

The reason for this distinction is that one cannot detect the presence of the creative force, since creation of something out of nothing implies that there is something new and detached from its source. The lif-force, by contrast, is a part of the consciousness of the person and when one realizes that their own life-force is

The Alter Rebbe elaborates: The reason the light descended from its original state (incorporated within the Infinite One) is for the purpose of its

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in truth an infinite force—that was diminished in the process of entering the person—one develops a yearning to be reconnected with, and absorbed in, one's infinite source of life.

In the Rebbe's own words:}

Perhaps, one may answer that this process of elevation of the creation (where it advances and elevated to, and absorbed within, G-dliness) that results from the [reaction to the] descent of the light, is more relevant to the descent of the light that is intended for giving life to the creatures.* The explanation of this distinction is that when the G-dly light creates something it is a new existence, whereas the life force within creation implies that the life force of all the creation is a G-dly life force. When one meditates on the idea that the very life-force of the creation is (essentially) infinite (and its finite nature is a product of the **descent**), this has the capacity to arouse the feeling of *ratzo* and longing to be absorbed within the light, the way it was before its descent.

*This is so notwithstanding the fact that the light that creates all of existence also goes through the process of descent (See *Hemshech 5672,* volume 2, p. 395ff. et al.).

elevation; that from the *yesh-an* existent entity there should become *ayin*-nullity. This means that the *yesh* should truly become nullified and absorbed within the Infinite Light.

With this premise he explains why the phrase "a pleasant fragrance" is mentioned only in regard to sacrifices (the world *nichoach*-fragrant is cognate to the word *nachas*-pleasure that derives from satisfaction). This is because the primary cause of satisfaction and delight above is when the *yesh*-an existent entity is nullified and reverts to the state of *ayin*-nothingness. And this nullification process is most pronounced in the offering of sacrifices. For the sacrificial service entails the elevation of that which is below upward; wherein the lower levels of existence break out of their mold and rise (and become contained within) that which is above (as will be explained below).

An additional concept:[56] In addition to the elevation of the sacrifice itself—where the animal that is offered on the altar would be burnt (its existence nullified) and incorporated within the heavenly

[56] See *Likkutei Torah, Pinchas* 77c-d for a discussion of all that follows.

fire—it also had an uplifting effect on the supernal angels. This is based on the verse:[57] "My offering, My bread as My fire-offering." The words "My fire-[offering]" are a reference to the *seraphim* angels[58] for whom the offering is their bread. It gives them increased power and life to enable them to become nullified and absorbed in the Infinite Light to the extent of being "drawn into[59] the body of the King."

This explains the significance of the song that accompanied the offering of the sacrifices, for every state of elevation comes through song. As our Sages state:[60] "All that possess a *shir* [lit. masters of *shir*] go out with a *shir* and are drawn by the *shir."*[61]

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[57] *Pinchas* 28:2.

[58] {The word *seraphim* actually relates to the world fire.}

[59] *Zohar* I, 217b.

[60] *Shabbos* 51b (in the *Mishnah*).

[61] {In the context of the *Mishnah*, the word *shir* refers to a collar worn around the neck of animals, and the issue is whether one may allow the animal to go out of a private domain into the public domain with this collar on Shabbos. The interpretation given here is that the word *shir* refers to song and the animals are references

Likkutei Torah[62] citing *Likkutei Amarim* of the *Magid* of Mezritch interprets the words "masters of *shir"* as a reference to the angels.[63] [This

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to the angels, and that going out refers to the process of elevation.}

[62] *Beracha* 98a.

[63] *Likkutei Torah, Beracha* ad loc. states that the elevation of souls is also aided by the medium of song. Perhaps, it may be suggested that the reason our Sages apply the words, "masters of *shir* go out with *shir*" specifically to angels** (who are called animals and beasts) is because the angels' elevation involves breaking out of the confining character of their bodies. By contrast souls [who do not possess bodies, as explained in *Likkutei Torah* ad loc.] need to go through the process of elevation only because their comprehension is **inherently** limited. The foregoing saying of our Sages that speaks of "going out with song" discusses, specifically, the process of breaking out of the bounds of the body. [This parallels the literal meaning of "going out" that involves going out of the location where one was situated (not going out of oneself).] And this form of elevation of "**going out** with song" therefore applies exclusively to angels ("Masters of *shir"*) and not to souls.

** *Sefer HaSichos* 5703 p. 11 cites the *Alter Rebbe's* saying that "All masters of *shir*, souls and angels go out

interpretation is connected to the literal meaning of the word *shir* that it is a reference to the collar placed around the neck of animals,[64] for angels are also called animals and beasts.[65]]

The meaning of "go out with a *shir"* thus is that through the song that the angels sing they go out of their parameters[66] to be absorbed in the Infinite Light of G-d.

IX

An additional insight: The fact that sacrifices involve the process of elevation is also related to their very

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with *shir*...their elevation is through melody and song." However, in many other sources it applies the term "masters of song" to the angels. *Sefer HaMaamrim* 5678 p. 95 states that although the elevation of the souls is also through song, the appellation "masters of song" refers exclusively to the angels. Perhaps the abovementioned statement of *Sefer HaSichos* 5703 that mentions both angels and souls refers to the concept (of elevation through song) but not to the title "masters of song."

[64] *Rashi* ad loc.

[65] *Tanya,* beginning of chapter 39. Eta al.

[66] {Literally: "their vessels.")

name which is *korban.* [Particularly, in light of the teaching of the Ba'al Shem Tov[67] (on the verse:[68] "Forever G-d, Your words[69] stand in the heavens"), that the name of everything in the Holy Tongue is not only descriptive of its function but is also representative of its G-dly life force.]

The word *korban* is cognate to the word *kiruv,*[70] implying that it is what draws one close to G-d. This is indicative of the concept of elevation. [71]In the

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[67] *Begiining of Shaar Hayichud Vo'he'emunah*

[68] *Tehillim* 119:89.

[69] {The meaning of "your words" according to the Baal Shem Tov is that the words with which G-d created the heavens (and likewise all other creation) are continuously being generated to create them. These words that represent G-d's creative power are the names, in the Holy Tongue, given to each creature. Hence the name given to something in the Torah represents its very life-force and is therefore descriptive of it very nature and function unlike the names given to things in other languages.}

[70] See *Sefer Habahir* 46 (109) referenced in *Sefer Hamamarim Melukat* 1 volume 2, p. 122, f. 15.

[71] {The Rebbe will now explain that there are two ways of getting to G-d: one is where G-d gets close to us and

reverse movement from "above below" one's attachment to G-dliness derives from G-d's closeness to him. However, the idea that a *korban* is connected with coming close (that he gets close to G-d) implies that he goes out of his own domain (existence) and is incorporated within G-dliness.[72]

One can find a connection between this idea and that which is stated in *Likkutei Torah*[73] that the word *lihakriv*-to bring close shares the same letters

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the other is where we get close to G-d. These two methods are described as "from above below" and "from below above." The Rebbe now stresses that the Korban is the closeness that comes from the person. This conclusion will become apparent in the next few paragraphs.}

[72] {When G-d gets close to us, it does not necessarily imply that we change and become absorbed in the G-dly light. We can experience a momentary high and be uplifted but it will not endure because we have not changed. However, when getting close to G-d is a product of our own efforts it allows us to become absorbed within G-d's infinite light.}

[73] *Chukas* 57b (from *Pri Etz Chaim* Portal 5 (*Shaar Olam Ho'asiyah)* chapter 3.

as the word *l'harkiv*-to decompose. When something decays it is the ultimate expression of nullification.

One may suggest the following explanation of this matter. When one offers a korban it elevates him to the level of G-d's infinite light that utterly transcends the worlds.[74] [Indeed, even more so. As the Zohar, cited in *Pri Etz Chaim,*[75] states:[76] "To what extent does the desire of sacrifices rise? Higher and higher to the *ain sof.*"][77] Thus, the state of nullification through sacrifices is identified as "decomposition"—utter nullification.

The same can be said concerning the sacrificial service as it pertains to the human being[78] that is

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[74] This is evident from the abovementioned citation (above sec. 8) in *Likkutei Torah, Pinchas:* "only He and His name."

[75] *Shaar Aleph (Shaar Hatefilah,* chapter 5.

[76] See *Zohar* II 239a. III 26a.

[77] {Not only does the *korban* transport us to the infinite light of the *ain sof,* but to the *ain sof* itself that transcends its infinite light.}

[78] See *Likkutei Torah, Pinchas* ad loc., beginning of chapter 3 (78a): "based on the above we can apply this concept to prayer that were enacted as substitutes for

expressed in the wording of the verse—"A person who shall offer **from you."** The purpose of the descent of the soul down below is for the purpose of ascent; so that the soul is elevated above and departs from its existence and becomes incorporated in the infinite light of G-d.

This process of elevation occurs during prayer inasmuch as prayers were enacted to substitute for sacrifices.[79] This is consonant with the teaching of the Baal Shem Tov[80] that emerging alive after prayer defies the laws of nature. The "powerful meditations"[81] of prayer should have engendered the expiration of the soul. That a person stays alive after prayer is not based on nature but is rather due to G-d's great kindness.

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sacrifices." One may suggest that the reference in the beginning of that discourse (77c) that states that the descent of the **soul** is for the purpose of elevation, alludes to the spiritual process of sacrifices.

[79] *Berachos* 26b.

[80] *Tzavaas Harivash* (Kehot edition) sec.35.

[81] This is the terminology used in *Tzavaas Harivash* there.

One may suggest that the reason the "powerful meditations" of prayer will, insofar as nature is concerned, lead to the expiration of the soul is because prayer is essentially a process of elevation, to the point where the person goes out of the parameters of his existence to become incorporated in the infinite light of G-d. This is analogous to the sacrifice which was consumed by fire and incorporated in the heavenly fire.

This is what our Sages stated:[82] One should not arise to pray other than from amidst heaviness of head." Rashi[83] explains that it means "submission and humility." This follows from the above that prayer entails **going out** of the parameters of one's existence and to be incorporated within the infinite light of G-d; utter nullification. Therefore, even the

[82] *Berachos* 30b..

[83] In several Chassidic sources it cites the words "submission and humility." (*Sefer HaMaamarim* 5665, end of p. 194. 5678, beginning of p. 94. 5707, p. 203. et al.). However in our texts of Rashi the word "humility" does not appear. Perhaps the word **humility** that is cited in Chassidic texts is intended as a clarification of the idea of submission.

preparation for prayer must involve a process of nullification.

The difference between the nullification before prayer and that which occurs in prayer is that during prayer one generates a sense of nullification because of his closeness to G-dliness. The person senses the lofty and exalted state of the infinite light of G-d and therefore wants to become a part of that.

By contrast, the state of nullification that occurs before praying is generated by a sense of broken-heartedness from the realization of how **distant** he is from G-d. Thus, the state of nullification during prayer is the "expiration of the soul;" its desire to become incorporated within the infinite light of G-d, whereas the nullification before prayer is the state of submission and humility.

The *Mitteler Rebbe*, in his discourse on the verse "After G-d your G-d you shall walk,"[84] and likewise

[84] Published in his work *Shaarei Teshuvah,* volume 1 (*Shaar Hatefilah)* 22d ff. See there chapter 2 (23, end of side c).

the *Tzemach Tzedek* in his discourse on this verse[85] explain that the reason submission and humility is a fitting preparation for prayer is connected to the saying of our Sages[86] "whoever humbles himself G-d will raise up."

One may suggest that *LIkkutei Torah's* association of the word *lihakriv* (to offer) with *l'harkiv* (to decompose) in that they share the same letters alludes to the state of nullification that precedes prayer.[87] The nullification in the "decomposition" process represents a loss of his identity even as it serves as a prelude and a catalyst to subsequent growth—analogous to [that which is said concerning] the state of humility before prayer (that it causes G-d to uplift him during prayer).

X

[85] Published in *Or HaTorah (Parshas R'ei)* p. 686ff. See there p. 687.

[86] *Eiruvin* 13b.

[87] See also *Or HaTorah* ad loc.: the heavy head that precedes prayer is the concept of decomposition that precedes the growth of vegetation.

Now concerning the state of submission and humility[88] there are two mediations:

In the aforementioned discourse of the *Mitteler Rebbe*[89] it is explained that in order to come to this state of submission and humility one must meditate on one's utter lowliness and on the great distance that exists between him and G-d etc. Moreover, this introspective meditation must be meticulous [lit. "with good and meticulous accounting" [90]] These people who engage in this type of meditation are called "masters of accounting."

[One may suggest that the statement that the accounting must be meticulous is similar to that which is expounded on at length in his *Sha'ar Hayichud* [91] that when the meditation is of a general nature his understanding of the subject is superficial and one can easily delude oneself. To gain a genuine and deep, one's meditation must involve the details.

[88] {that precedes the prayer}

[89] Chapter 3 (23d).

[90] {Below, the Rebbe will elaborate on this repetitive expression.}

[91] Chapter 4.

However, after one has meditated on the details he must examine and reflect on the general theme. [He mentions there[92] that this is what his father (the Alter Rebbe) explicitly received from the Maggid.]

It may be suggested that the choice of the terminology concerning the meditation that it must be "with good and meticulous accounting" is to suggest that one must meditate on the details. Besides the fact that, accounting, by definition, generally implies counting details, a "meticulous accounting" suggests a precise counting of every detail.][93]

The *Tzemach Tzedek*, in the foregoing discourse, adds[94] that the term "masters of accounting" is

[92] At the end of the chapter (5a).

[93] {The Rebbe means to distinguish between accounting merely to ascertain the quantity of what it is that's being counted versus the process whereby every detail is scrutinized for its quality as well. This is analogous to the difference between on who checks inventory to know how many products you have and one who tells you the quality of each product.}

[94] in the "summary" that is published in *Or HaTorah* ad loc., in the margin at the bottom of the page). However

related our Sages'[95] commentary on the verse[96] "Come unto Cheshbon": "Come let us make an accounting of this world." This refers to the accounting concerning the very purpose of the descent in creation and the ultimate purpose of the descent of his soul to this world; that the descent is for the purpose of ascent. When a person reflects on the fact that he does not fulfill his purpose for which his soul descended below it will make him humble.

The difference between these two approaches[97] is that the reason this meditation—that the humility (the "heavy head" that precedes the prayers) comes

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in the text itself the explanation accords with that of the *MItteler Rebbe* in his *Sha'ar Hatefilah*..

[95] *Bava Basra* 78b.

[96] *Chukas* 21:27.

[97] {i.e., the difference between the approach of the *Mitteler Rebbe,* who focuses on the meditation that concerns one's distance from G-d and the *Tzemach Tzedek*'s approach that focuses on the purpose of our soul's descent. Both of these meditation lead a person to a sense of humility that is necessary as a preparation for prayer.}

from meditating on one's utter lowliness and the great distance between him and G-d—is a preparation for the prayers because one can attain lofty heights through the state of self-abnegation, for "whoever humbles himself G-d will raise up."[98]

By contrast—the approach that humility derives from reflecting on the idea that the descent must be for the purpose of ascent—is a preparation for the prayers not only because of the virtue of self-abnegation. It goes beyond that. This meditation of humility is itself related to the idea of prayer.

The rationale for this is that in order for a person to feel the descent (and that its purpose is for the sake of subsequent elevation) he must possess a feeling of the lofty and phenomenal nature of G-dliness. The more one appreciates the loftiness of G-d the more he will feel the extent of the descent. And since one's humility derives from his recognition that he did not fulfill the purpose for which his soul descended, it follows that the feeling

[98] {See f. 86}

of the sublime nature of G-d is somewhat inherent in that humility.[99]

Note the words of the Alter Rebbe in his *Shulchan Aruch*[100] that before prayer one must reflect on the exaltedness of G-d, may He be blessed, and the lowliness of man. One may suggest that the meditation concerning man's lowliness is not an independent meditation. It follows from and is a consequence of the mediation concerning G-d's exaltedness.[101]

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[99] {One must have some modicum of appreciation for the greatness of G-d to feel this form of humility. And as the Rebbe will explain shortly, this makes the meditation itself that precedes prayer an integral part of prayer, not just a prepatory exercise.}

[100] *Orach Chaim, Hilchos Tefilah* 98:1.

[101] Note the words of the *Rema, Orach Chaim,* ad loc.: "…and **about** the lowliness of man." One may suggest that the expression **"about** the lowliness" implies that the meditation of the exaltedness of G-d and the meditation of the lowliness of man are two separate (but equal) matters. The Alter Rebbe therefore writes "and the lowliness."

Based on the above it follows that the "heavy head" state of mind that precedes and is a preparation for prayer is not only because of the virtue of self-abnegation but also because in that "heavy head" there is a sensation of the exaltedness of G-d, the very concept of prayer.

The difference between this preparation and prayer itself is that this meditation concerning the exaltedness of G-d is directed towards the appreciation for the lowliness of man, which is why, in fact, it does lead to submission and humility. The meditation of prayer itself by contrast, is purely about the exaltedness of G-d and the state of self-abnegation that ensues from this meditation is (not submission and humility but rather) that he becomes absorbed and incorporated within G-dliness (as was mentioned above, sec. 9).

XI

And additional insight:

The difference between the meditation that precedes the prayers and the meditation during prayer relates

to the concept of G-d's exaltedness itself.[102] As stated above, the state of self-abnegation that one experiences during prayer is total (analogous to the sacrifice that was totally **consumed** in the heavenly fire). This is the state of the "expiration of the soul (as was discussed above (sec. 5) concerning the Ba'al Shem Tov). This state of total nullification is achieved because the mediation of prayer (specifically the reading of the Shema) focuses on the infinite light of G-d that is beyond having any connection to the world. In relation to this awareness "everything before Him is as nothing."[103] This is the meditation on the words "G-d is one."[104]

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[102] {In the preceding section the distinction between the meditation about G-d greatness before prayer and during prayer is that the meditation before prayer focuses on G-d's greatness as a medium to attain a state of humility, whereas the meditation of G-d's greatness during prayer is purely about His greatness. In this section, the Rebbe demonstrates that the meditations themselves are about different aspects of G-d's greatness.}

[103] See *Likkutei Torah, Pinchas,* cited in f. 78.

[104] {Ibid.}

The Rebbe Maharash expounds[105] on the meaning of the concept of "one" that is analogous to the concept of "You are one but not in the numerical sense."[106] He explains that we can quantify something in terms of one thing being quantitatively or qualitatively greater than another only where the two things being contrasted are within range of each other, wherein it can be said that one is greater than the other. For example: the world of *Atzilus* as compared with the worlds of *BY"A*[107] that are comparable. [This is so despite the existence of a

[105] *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5627, p. 137. The discussion there concerns the subject of "prayer was instituted as a substitute for sacrifices."

[106] *Tikkunei Zohar (Pasach Eliyahu)* 17a.

[107] {This is a reference to the three spiritual worlds of *Beriyah, Yetzirah* and *Asiya* that are qualitatively lower than the highest world of *Atzilus*. They differ as to the degree of appreciating G-d's absolute unity. In *Atzilus* there is no room for anything else, even a dependent, existence. It is known as the world of total unity. By contrast, the lower three worlds—in varying degree recognize their own existence. They vary insofar as their recognition of their dependence on and subservience to G-d.}

parsa (curtain)[108] between *Atzilus* and *BY"A.* Nevertheless, the creation of *chochma of Atzilus* from *chochma* of *By'a* occurs when *chochma* of *BY"A* cloaks itself within the *parsa* and causes the creation of *chochma* of *Beriah.*[109]]

Thus it is possible to quantify the preeminence of *Atzilus* relative to B*Y"A.*

However, with respect to the infinite light of G-d, it is impossible to make any comparisons. The infinite light of G-d is incomparably greater than all the worlds (including *Atzilus*). The creation of all these worlds has to go through the process of *tzimtzum,*

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[108] {Just as the curtain screens the light—not only diminishing it but altering its nature—so too the lower worlds of BY"A are qualitatively removed from the exalted state of G-dly perception in the higher world of *Atzilus.*}

[109] *Torah Or, Vayeira* 14:c – cited in *Sefer HaMaamrim* 5627 ad loc.

{In other words, notwithstanding the major transformation that takes place in the transition from *chochma* of *Atzilus* to *chochma* of *BY"A,* nevertheless, *chochma* of *BY"A is still chochma;* they still have something in common}

which is a process in which the light is **concealed.**[110] On that plane there is no basis for quantification. Thus, it is said: "You are one but not in the numerical sense."[111]

Meditating on this thought generates a feeling of love that is expressed in the verse "Whom[112] do I have in heaven? And when I am with You I desire nothing on earth." At this point, one no longer desires the lower level of Gan Eden (earth) neither the upper level (heaven); only G-d Himself. This is what the Alter Rebbe would say:[113] "I want nothing. I

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[110] Ibid.

[111] {Generally, when the term "one" is used, it suggests that there is number two that follows, albeit far behind. With respect to the oneness of the infinite light of G-d, that relative concept of oneness does not apply.}

[112] *Tehillim* 73:25.

[113] *Shoresh Mitzvas Hatefilah* of *Tzemach Tzedek*, chapter 40 (138, end of side a). It may be suggested that the idea of "and what is with You I do not desire" that is discussed in *Sefer HaMaamrim* 5627 ad loc. relates to the person's passion to the infinite light of G-d, that all the worlds are incomparable to (as explained here in the text). When the Alter Rebbe exclaimed, "I want only You exclusively," he was saying that he does not even desire

want not Your Gan Eden, I don't want Your World-to-Come, I want you, and You alone."

The Discourse[114] continues:

The usage of the term "desire" in the verse "and when I am with You I **desire** nothing," as opposed to the word *ratzon*-want, is because "want" can also express one's external will. Even an expression of will that comes through coercion can be characterized as *ratzon,* as in: "he is coerced[115] until he says '*Rotzeh Ani*-'I want'."[116] The term *cheifetz* by contrast connotes an inner desire.[117]

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the light (even the light that preceded the *tzimtzum*, including the most sublime levels of that light). His desire was G-d's very Essence—"only You, exclusively."

[114] *Sefer Hama'amarim* ad loc. p. 138.

[115] *Toras Kohanim* and *Rashi's* commentary on *Vayikra* 1:3. *Erachin* 21a (in the *Mishnah*).

[116] This proof is also found in *Likkutei Torah, Sir Hashirim* 28d: The fact that it states that "he is coerced until he says 'I want.'" Proves that will that derives from coercion is still called will. There is no contradiction to that which Rambam writes (*Hilchos Geirushin* end of Chapter 2) that this is his true will and desire – because in his mind **he thinks** that he want

Thus, when it says, "and when I am with You I **desire** nothing," it suggests that the external will does exist for the manifestations of G-d that form the entire structure of worlds (*Hishtalshelus*)[118]. The

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it only because he was coerced into it. And because he says "I want" (employing a **Torah** expression) it proves that this too is considered *ratzon*-will.

[117] {Rambam, based on the Talmud, discusses the person who is legally obligated to give his wife a divorce and refuses to do so. He may be coerced by the Jewish courts to acquiesce to their demand by using force. When he says, "I want," the divorce may be processed. It is clear that his will that he expresses is not what he desires; but nevertheless it may be categorized as will. Another less dramatic example would be a person who is "forced" to sell his house because he is strapped for cash. Though he goes through a perfectly legal transaction that he cannot renege on because he ultimately expressed his consent to it, it is certainly not something he desires. It is *ratzon* and not *chefetz*.}

[118] {In Kabbalah and in Chassidic literature, the entire system of worlds and levels (*Sefiros*-Divine attributes) within the worlds, before and after the *tzimtzum*-the contraction of G-d's infinite light, are all collectively referred to as "*seder hishtalshelus*." This phrase connotes the chain of interlocking links of spiritual levels that vary in their proximity to G-d and that

inner will, however, desires only the essence of the infinite light of G-d.

One may suggest that the reason for wanting the G-dly manifestations that form the order of *hishtalshelus* is because it is analogous to the way the creation of the world occurs from on High to the levels below. The creation of this lowly world from G-d's essence goes through the mediation of G-dly manifestations, including the manifestations that are part of *hishtalshelus*.[119]

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devolve from one another. The lower worlds "devolve" from the next higher world, et al, until this physical world emerges. The Rebbe is stating here that although the *Alter Rebbe*'s **desire** was for G-d Himself who transcends the entire *hishtalshelus* he did **want** to connect to the spiritual levels that represent manifestations of G-d and not His essence. As will be explained, these levels are necessary, though they are not the ultimate goal.}

[119] {In other words, G-d chose to create our world through a process. While He could have just created it without the need for intermediary spiritual worlds, He nevertheless chose to make it happen through these worlds that reflect different and regressive levels of G-dly light that descend level by level to give expression to

The same can be said for the process of elevation upward. One's elevation to and incorporation in the essence of the infinite light of G-d goes through the medium of the manifestations of *hishtalshelus*. He therefore wants these manifestations, although his desire for them is an external expression of his will; merely as a means to reach the goal, the essence of the infinite light of G-d.

It should be noted, however, that in several sources[120] (in an exposition of the verse:[121] "I desire kindness, not an offering,") there is a suggestion that *cheifetz,* the inner desire applies only to kindness; the extension of G-d's beneficence below. This is in contrast to the will G-d has for the offerings—which involves the process of elevation upward—is only an expression of His external will.

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our lowly physical world. The same is true of the soul's ascending to become one with its source, the essence of G-d; it goes through the entire order of *hishtalshelus* to climb through all these progressive levels of Divine manifestations on its way to unite with G-d's essence}.

[120] See *Sefer HamMa'amarim Melukat,* volume 5, p. 181, and the source cited there.

[121] *Hoshea* 6:6.

It serves as a medium to facilitate the downward flow of His beneficence, which results from the process of elevation.[122]

This is at variance with the discussion in this discourse[123] that suggests that the inner desire of a Jew [which is reflection of how it is Above; for the Jewish people are G-d's children, and the will of the

[122] {According to these sources, G-d's inner desire and will is for a one way flow of Divine beneficence downward as an expression of G-d's kindness. While it is true that G-d also wants the upward movement of energy that is generated through sacrifices, however, that movement is only a means to an end; the end being another downward flow of Divine energy. This is at variance with the discussion of the *Rebbe Maharash's* discourse cited here, where this process of elevation that defines the purpose of a sacrifice is also an expression of G-d's inner desire. Now, the Rebbe *Maharash* is discussing the inner desire of the person below, whereas the sources cited here deal with G-d's inner desire. This challenge is anticipated by the Rebbe, who explains here that our desires mirror G-d's because we are His children. If it is our inner desire then it should also be G-d's. The Rebbe does not provide a reconciliation of these variant sources.}

[123] {of the Rebbe *Maharash*, cited in f. 114.}

child is the will of the father], is inherent in the process of elevation from below as well.

XII

The Discourse[124] continues:

Despite the fact that the love expressed in the verse "Whom do I have in heaven? And when I am with You I desire nothing on earth" is primarily that of the G-dly soul, however, through lengthy meditation even the animal soul will accede to this.

This is why, after the recitation of "*Shema Yisrael*- Hear O Israel...G-d is one," it says, "And you shall love G-d your G-d with all your heart" which is interpreted to mean with both inclinations.[125] When the G-dly soul ("Hear O **Israel**) meditates on the concept of *echad*-one—"You are one but not in the numerical sense"—the animal soul too will come to love G-d this way.

[124] {ibid.}

[125] *Va'eschanan* 6:5. *Berachos* 54a. (In the *Mishnah*). *Sifri* (cited by *Rashi*) on that verse.

This is as the *Rebbe Rashab* explains in his *Hemshech*-Series 5666[126] that when the G-dly soul understands and grasps the concept of G-d's oneness it has an effect on the animal soul, at least to the extent that it understands the compelling reason to accept this premise although it does not grasp the idea itself.

The *Rebbe Rashab* (in the abovementioned series of 5666) adds another insight: Since the G-dly soul inserts itself within the animal soul, its fiery flashes therefore consumes the animal soul as well.

One could add another insight: When the animal soul is incorporated within and consumed by the fiery flashes of the G-dly soul, it elicits a more sublime revelation than that which is elicited by the love of the G-dly soul. As explained in the series of discourses of the *Hilulo*:[127] The service of *iskafia* and *ishapcha* generate a light that manifests itself in all

[126] P. 135.

[127] {A reference to the series of discourses of *Basi L'gani*}

worlds equally, which is the light that transcends all of the worlds.[128]

[It should be noted, that this concept[129] is discussed in the series even at the end and seal of chapter two in the context of the statement that the animal soul is elevated and incorporated within the fiery flashes of the G-dly soul.[130]]

[128] {The process of *iskafia* and *ishapcha,* suppressing and transforming the evil within us, respectively, are, by definition, efforts that involve the animal soul. And it is through those efforts, specifically, that generate the "light that is equal in all worlds," i.e., the most transcendent of lights. This cannot be achieved just by the G-dly souls passion for G-d.}

[129] {that *iskafia* and *ishapcha* generate the transcendent light}

[130] {AT that point it seems that the emphasis is on the benefits that accrue to the animal soul by virtue of its elevation into the G-dly soul. However, by repeating, in that discussion, the idea concerning the role of *iskafia* and *ishapcha* in eliciting the transcendent light it thus implies that the G-dly soul is also a beneficiary with its engagement with the animal soul for it can then attain an enhanced revelation of G-dly light.}

By virtue of our actions and service throughout the period of exile[131]—when the service of *iskafia* and *ishapcha* are most pronounced—we can elicit the essence of the *Shechinah* below even more so than it was expressed in the *Beis Hamikdash.* The difference is that now it is all concealed, to be revealed in the future age of Redemption.

May it be His will that truly, very soon, we will see the fulfillment of that which is stated in this week's parsha:[132] "And the children of Israel left with an outstretched hand," and with a "head held high."[133] May all this happen, literally, soon!

[131] See *Tanya,* beginning of Chapter 37.

[132] *Beshallach* 14:8.

[133] *Targum Onkeles* ad loc. See *Likkutei Sichos,* volume 3, p. 874: The name of the *Ba'al Hahilulo* is hinted in the word "*b'reish*", see there at length.

BASI L'GANI

YUD SHVAT 5733

INTRODUCTION

The Alter Rebbe once said that one must live with the times. Contrary to the way it sounds, the Alter Rebbe was not advocating following modern trends and changing with the times by adjusting our Judaism to the changing values and mores of society. In fact, the opposite is true. The Alter Rebbe was referring to the times measured by the Torah. One must seek guidance for our lives from the weekly Torah portion. So if this week we are reading about the Egyptian bondage and Exodus, we must learn lessons concerning our own spiritual bondage and the proper path to Redemption, etc.

Chassidim have added another layer to the notion of "living with the times." There is an expression that the Rebbe mentioned repeatedly: "the Chassidic *Parsha*." He was referring to the study of the discourses of the Alter Rebbe on the weekly Torah portions in his seminal works *Torah Or* and *Likkutei Torah*"

In other words, in addition to the lessons gleaned from the actual narratives and laws of the Torah, we must also glean deeper insights from the wellsprings of Chassidus on those Biblical texts, as they correspond to that particular week.

But the Jewish cycle of time is measured yet another way. In addition to the weekly Torah readings, our year is seasoned with Holidays. We must obviously live with the messages of those Holidays, particularly as they are viewed through the lense of *Chassidus*.

One may add that there are certain seasonal discourses that Chassidim "lived with" with extraordinary devotion. One such discourse—or series of discourses—is *Basi L'Gani.*

The Previous Rebbe issued a discourse entitled *Basi L'Gani* to be studied on the tenth day of Shevat in the year 5710-1950, which was the yahrtzeit of his grandmother, the *Rebbetzin Rivkah*. That day, the Previous Rebbe left us physically as well, and, as a result, this discourse became the final Divine message that was channeled through the Rebbe, the

leader of that generation, to his followers, and indeed to the entire Jewish nation for posterity.

The Rebbe asked of us to study this discourse and review it publically throughout the day of Yud Shevat and study it in the days that lead to Yud Shevat.

From the year 5711—the first *Hilula* of the Previous Rebbe—onward the Rebbe delivered a *Ma'amar*/Chassidic Discourse with the same title of *Basi L'Gani*. Indeed, the recitation of that discourse in the year 5711 was the "sign" that the Rebbe had finally accepted the role of Rebbe after many months of protesting that he would not assume that position.

Each year the discourse focused and elaborated on one chapter of the Discourse. The original *Ma'amar* (which is actually a series of four discourses) comprises twenty chapters and for twenty years the Rebbe delivered a *Ma'amar* on the chapter that corresponded to that year. In the year 5730, the Rebbe concluded a series of annual *Basi L'Gani* discourses, elaborating on the final twentieth

chapter. There was some suspense as to what the Rebbe would do the next year.

In the year 5731, the Rebbe started a new series of discourses beginning again with a *Ma'amar* on the first chapter of the original *Ma'amar*. It was a completely new discourse, not a repetition of the one he said in 5711. This custom continued until—and through—the year 5748, when the Rebbe delivered a discourse on the 18th chapter. For reasons that were not divulged, the Rebbe did not continue this custom for the years beyond 5748. However, he did edit and submit for publication some of the earlier discourses, including the one of 5732. This was one of the last discourses the Rebbe edited for publication for Yud Shevat 5752.

In short, Chassidim were asked to live with—and they did live—with *Basi L'gani* in general and the corresponding chapter in particular. This year 5773 (the fourth cycle) we live with the discourses that the Rebbe said in the years 5713 and 5733.

The following is a free translation and annotation of the Rebbe's discourse of 5733.

Unlike the past year's discourse, the Rebbe did not edit the discourse of the year 5733. In addition, the Rebbe delivered this discourse on two occasions with some variation. The first discourse was delivered on Shabbos and was transcribed by a group of scholars who are known as "*chozrim*-reviewers," who reconstructed it from memory. That night, the Rebbe delivered another discourse on the same chapter, albeit with significant additions and variations. Although, the central theme of the two discourses is the same, there are many details that each discourse adds.

I have chosen to translate the second discourse that was taken and transcribed from the tape ensuring a greater degree of accuracy. However, it should be noted that, the version that this translation is based on cannot be compared to a *Ma'amar* that the Rebbe would edit and issue for publication. Any inconsistencies, errors etc. should therefore be attributed to the transcriber or/and the translator.

Most of the references cited in the footnotes were supplied by the publishers of these discourses ("Va'ad L'Hafotzas Sichos") and were reproduced here in the translation. Additional footnotes were

added by the translator to help clarify some of the concepts in the *Ma'amar*. These comments are my hu,ble attempt at making some of the arcane concepts somewhat more accessible to the average reader. I cannot vouch for their accuracy.

I am dedicating this translation-annotation to the memory and elevation of the soul of my dear brother-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel ע"ה ben Harav Nochum Halevi Labkowsky, who passed away on the 10th of Kislev this year.

It is my fervent prayer that the study of this *Ma'amar* will hasten the time when we will be reunited with the *Ba'al Hilulo* and our Rebbe, and of הרה"ג הרה"ח אי"א נו"נ מוהר"ר מנחם מענדל בהר"ר נחום הלוי ע"ה – imminently.

Heschel Greenberg

20th of Teves, Hilula of Rambam, 5773

Buffalo, New York

BS"D

MA'AMAR/DISCOURSE OF REBBE BASI L'GANI

YUD SHEVAT 5733

"I have come into My garden, My sister, My bride" [134]

My sainted father-in-law, the Rebbe, *Ba'al Ha'hilula*[135]—in the discourse issued for his

[134] *Shir HaShirim* 5, 1.

The entire book of *Shir Hashirim* is a metaphor that describes the mutual love between G-d and the Jewish people. The Midrash's comments cited here refer to the construction of the Mishkan, the portable Sanctuary the Jews built in the desert. This Sanctuary was intended as a place where G-d's presence would be felt in this physical world. And it is concerning G-d's revelation in this Sanctuary that the Midrash applies the words, "I have come to My garden," implying that G-d was returning to the place he originally inhabited.

Histalkus, [136],[137]—cites the Midrash Rabbah's comments on this verse: [138]

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[135] The word *Hilula* (which means wedding) is used to describe the passing of a *Tzadik* at which time the soul reunites with its Maker, the phrase *Baal HaHilula* literally means :the master of the wedding;" which, in Chassidic parlance refers to the person whose anniversary of his passing we are observing.

[136] Literally: His ascent; a term used for the passing of a righteous person.

[137] *Basi L'Gani* 5710 (*Sefer Ha'Ma'arim* 5710, p. 111 onward. This discourse was submitted by the *Ba'al HaHilula* for Yud Shevat 5710, the day of his *histalkus*.

[138] In the original discourse of the Previous Rebbe, the reference to the Midrash is phrased as: "in the *Midrash Rabbah bimkomo*-in its place," meaning that the Midrash's comments are on that verse in *Shir Hashirim*. The Rebbe in all of his discourses on this verse emphasizes this term "in its place." The need to emphasize that point is presumably due to the fact that this Midrashic exegesis can be found in several places in Midrash Rabbah and the Rebbe calls our attention to this particular version of the Midrash.

Chassidim, however, read into this term a deeper meaning. In the Midrash's version on this verse the

The words "My garden" means "My chamber;" to the place where My essence was originally revealed, for the essence of the *Shechinah* (Divine presence) was originally revealed below. The term "below" refers to the lowly physical world; lower than which nothing exists. Thus, it is referred to as "**My** garden".[139]

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teaching of *Basi L'gani* is ascribed to a Rabbi Menachem, the son-in-law of another great Sage. The Chassidim believe that this was a reference to the Previous Rebbe's desire that the Rebbe should succeed him as Rebbe. Hence the term, "in his place." It is also interesting to note that the Hebrew word "*bimkomo*" carries the numerical equivalent of the Rebbe's second name Mendel (194)!

[139] The emphasis of the word "My" is to indicate that when G-d says "I have come to My garden/dwelling place" He was coming to a world that was **already** His because at the time of creation the Shechinah dwelled in this world. The presence of G-d at the revelation at Sinai and construction of the Mishkan was merely restoring G-d's presence in this world. As the discourse will explain, the salient difference between the Shechinah's presence at Creation as compared with its return at the time of Sinai and the building of the Mishkan is that the latter is generated by **our** efforts.

However, the Midrash continues, through a series of seven sins committed by seven generations—beginning with the sin of the Tree of Knowledge—the *Shechinah* departed upward to the seventh heaven.

[The reason for the sin of the Tree of Knowledge was to facilitate human endeavor in serving G-d. Thus the following verse was applied to this sin: "[Go and see the works of G-d] awesome in His deeds (*nora alila*) toward mankind."[140] The word *alila* also conveys the idea of a plot of entrapment.[141]]

The Midrash continues:

Afterwards, seven righteous people arose (beginning with our Father Abraham, for "Abraham was unique"[142]) and brought the *Shechinah* closer

[140] *Tehillim* 66:5. *Tanchuma, Vayeshev* 4. See also *Basi L'Gani* 5731, chapter 3.

[141] The implication of this is that G-d orchestrated the first sin. If not for that transgression we would not have the challenge from our evil impulse and human endeavor would not be possible.

[142] *Yechezkal* 33:24.

from the seventh to the sixth heaven. This continued until Moses arrived, who was the seventh—and "all sevens are beloved"[143]—and brought it down to the earth.

Moses not only brought the Shechinah down from a higher realm to a lower realm; but he also achieved the most essential task of bringing the Shechinah down to the earth—to "My garden, My dwelling place; the place where My essence was originally revealed."[144]

Moreover, Moses introduced the innovative process that empowered us, through our own initiatives, to bring the essence of the Shechinah below.

This foregoing explains the verse "The righteous will inherit the land, and they will dwell on it

[143] *Vayikra Rabbah* 29:11.

[144] Moses was unique among the other six righteous people. For they succeeded in bringing the *Shechinah* down one level, Moses succeeded in bringing the *Shechinah* from the spiritual realm down into the physical. That was a qualitatively far greater achievement.

eternally."[145] The righteous ones cause the dwelling (i.e., the eliciting and "downloading"[146]) of the *Shechinah*, referred to as "eternal," the encompassing, transcendent aspect of the Divine, to be revealed on "it", i.e., in the physical world. For this achievement they will inherit the land.[147]

[145] *Tehillim* 37, 29.

[146] See *Matnat Kehunah* and *Maharzav* on *Bamidbar Rabbah* 13, 2. *Maharzav* on *Bereishis Rabbah* 19, 7.

[147] In the original *Basi L'Gani*, the term "land" here refers to *Gan Eden*-Garden of Eden, the place where the souls of the righteous receive their reward. At the beginning of creation, Adam and Eve were placed in the physical counterpart of the Garden of Eden. Perhaps, the emphasis on this place as the reward for the righteous is that it is "measure for measure." The transgressions caused the departure of the Divine presence from *Gan Eden*. Therefore they are rewarded by basking in the light of the Shechinah in *Gan Eden* which was affected by the sins and restored by their efforts.

This accords with the statement, "when the *Sitra Achara*[148] is subdued, it elicits the glory of G-d in all the worlds."[149]

[148] Literally: "the other side", the Kabbalistic terminology for evil. When we invest our own efforts to suppress the negative forces we cause the infinite light of G-d that transcends, and therefore encompasses, all the worlds equally to be introduced into our world—the essence of the Shechinah.

[149] See *Tanya*, end of chapter 27. *Likkutei Torah* beginning of *Parshas Bechokosei* (based on *Zohar* 128b. See also there 67b. 184b). *Torah Or, Vayakhel* 89d. *Likkutei Torah, Chukas* 65c. (These references were taken from the Rebbe's footnotes to the *Ma'amar* of the year 5732.)

The point of this quote from the Zohar is that the righteous, by virtue of their suppression of the "other side" elicit the glory of G-d that is equally revealed in all worlds—i.e., the transcendent light, the essence of the *Shechinah*. The term "in all the worlds," according to the interpretation in the original discourse, *Basi L'Gani* relates not to where the light is generated, but to the quality of light that is elicited—a light that transcends all the worlds.

Thus, after Moses brought the Shechinah down below, G-d issued the general command "Make for Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in them." The plural "them" refers to each and every one.[150] This implies that human effort in making a Sanctuary for G-d will cause the Shechinah to dwell within them. The same is true with respect to the general, spiritual service of each individual. *Tzadikim*-the righteous (and, "your entire nation is righteous."[151]) will inherit the land because they cause the Shechinah that endures forever to dwell upon it.

II.

Now, since the creation of the Sanctuary through which the Shechinah dwells is a paradigm for all of

[150] This interpretation is cited in *Likkutei Torah* (beginning of *Parshas Naso* 20, end of side b) attributing it to "Our Sages of blessed memory." See *Reishis Chochma, Shaar HoAhavah*, near the beginning of chapter 6 (paragraph beginning with words: *ushnei pesukim* 69b), et al. – referenced in *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 27, p. 414. (These references taken from the Rebbe's footnote to the *Ma'amar* of the year 5732.)

[151] *Yeshayahu* 60:21. See *Sanhedrin*, beginning of Chapter *Chelek*.

the levels of existence,[152] it follows then that even the specifics of the construction of the Sanctuary convey a message.

This is, in fact, the theme of the third chapter of the discourse (that relates to this year[153]). There it

[152] *Seder Hishtalshelus*-Literally: "the entire sequential (or: hierarchical) order." This is a term used in Chassidic literature to encompass all of the spiritual realms, from the highest transcendent worlds to the physical. They are like links in a chain (*shalsheles* in Hebrew), where one level is interlocked within the next in a downward progression to give rise to our physical world.

The Rebbe's point here is that all of the myriad levels within creation owe their existence to and are profoundly affected by G-d's "return" to this world that occurred with the construction of the Mishkan, it follows that every detail of its construction must teach us something about how we fulfill the purpose for which we and the entire cosmos was created,

[153] 5733 (the year this discourse was delivered) – was the third year of the **second** cycle. This year (5773) we learn this chapter of the series of discourses for the **fourth** time—See "foreword" of the discourse of the same title 5728 *(Sefer HaMaamarim Melukat*, volume 2, p. 238; p. 257). See also the Rebbe's footnote (23) to the *Ma'amar* of 5748.

discusses one of the primary aspects of the Sanctuary; its construction using boards (*k'rashim*) that were made of standing *Shittim* (acacia) wood.[154]

Now, the Hebrew name[155] of each thing is the source of its creation, its continued existence and its life force, as explained in the writings of the Arizal, and subsequently in the teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov,[156] the Maggid,[157] the Alter Rebbe's *Sha'ar Hayichud Vo'he'Emunah*[158]—as well as in the discourses of the Rebbe's that followed.

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[154] *Terumah* 26:15.

[155] The Hebrew name given to a person or an object is not just an arbitrary name. The letters of the "Holy Tongue" are actually Divine instruments of creation. Thus, as will be explained shortly, the name *Shittim* given to the wood used in the construction of the Mishkan transmits the very objective of the Mishkan.

[156] Cited in *Toldos Ya'akov Yosef, parshas Shemos* (37d). *Sha'ar Hayichud Vo'he'emunah* cited in next n. 24.

[157] *Or Torah* of the Maggid, end of *parshas Bereishis, et al.*

[158] Chapter one.

The above applies to the word *Shittim*. The name itself clarifies its character. It implies a deviation from the straightforward path.

In order for us to be able to serve G-d there has to be an entity that we can work on. This is analogous to that which was discussed above that there had to be the existence of sin in order for us to suppress the "other side" with our own efforts and thereby eliciting the Divine presence in this world.

Similarly, in order for the boards of Mishkan that were made from *Shittim* wood to perform their function there had to be the idea of *Shittim*-deviation; the concept of sin.

At first glance, this concept requires clarification. There is a well-known saying of the Alter Rebbe:[159] "A Jew neither desires nor can he be detached from G-dliness." Each and every Jew wants to fulfill the will of G-d. How then can a Jew sin?

[159] See the discussion in the original *Ma'amar* of the Previous Rebbe (*Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5710 p. 115, 117). *Hayom Yom*, 25 Tammuz. *Igros Kodesh* of Previous Rebbe, volume 4, p. 384.

The answer to this question can be derived from our Sages' statement[160] "No one transgresses unless a spirit of folly (*Shtus)* enters him." Indeed, the word "*shittim*" is also cognate to the word *shtus*-folly. Hence the cause of one's deviation from the path of truth is foolishness.[161]

In this chapter of the discourse,[162] it dwells on the state of one whose spirit of folly conceals the reality

[160] *Sotah* 3a.

[161] The word *shittim* is related to two different words: deviation and folly. Here the Rebbe is suggesting that the two translations are interrelated: The reason one strays from the path of righteousness is the spirit of folly. Indeed, the very definition of folly is deviation from the norm. In the original discourse of the Previous Rebbe, he emphasizes that there are two forms of folly. Deviating "downward" from the path of normalcy and decency is evil folly. When one deviates "upward" from the path of normalcy, that too is folly, but it is "holy folly." And this holy folly is needed to neutralize te negative form of folly.

[162] Chapter three.

that a Jew[163] neither desires nor is capable of being detached from G-dliness.

This spirit of folly is responsible for two effects: It generates heated passion for and excitement with material matters and it also cools off one's attitude and renders him indifferent to spiritual matters. This is the function of the Animal Soul which, much like an animal, is preoccupied with material matters while indifferent to spiritual matters.

III.

In order for these two modalities of the Animal Soul—its icy indifference and heated passion—to exist they must be rooted in a corresponding G-dly realm. Everything in this world has a source and root in the realms of holiness.[164]

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[163] By virtue of his **intrinsic** nature.

[164] It is a basic doctrine in Chassidic thought that nothing in the physical realm—even evil—can possibly exist if there was no parallel to it in the spiritual realm. As the Rebbe emphasizes in his first discourse, *Basi L'Gani*, of the year 5773, this does not mean that in the realm of holiness there is even a trace of evil. It merely suggests that there must be a parallel force in the

The above can be explained in light of the teaching of the Ba'al Shem Tov[165] on the verse "and G-d said, 'let there be light and there was light.'"[166] This verse describes the beginning of the process of the creation of the entire order of worlds (*Seder Hishtalshelus*). This can be derived from Midrash Rabbah's statement (in its opening words on the verse "In the beginning...") that the Torah is the very blueprint of the entire creation. For in this verse ("In the beginning) it discusses the creation in its entirety.[167]

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spiritual world, albeit totally within the parameters of holiness.

[165] *Keser Shem Tov* sec. 247 (32b).

[166] *Bereishis* 1:3.

[167] The Rebbe seems to be suggesting that the Midrash's statement that the Torah is the blueprint of creation is rooted in the very first verse of *Bereishis*. Hence, this verse—even before we proceed to the following verses that describe the creation—contains within it the entire order of existence.

And this is consistent with the words of the *Zohar*[168] on the foregoing verse: "In the beginning G-d created heaven and earth." This verse, the Zohar explains, contains all of the Ten Divine Attributes.[169] The first three words "*Bereishis Bara Elokim*-In the beginning, G-d created" alludes to the first three intellectual attributes.[170] The concluding words, "the heavens and the earth" relate to the "seven days of building," a reference to *z"a* and *malchus*,[171] G-d's emotional attributes. In more

[168] *Zohar*, volume 1 31b. 256b. See *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5651, p. 69ff.

[169] These Ten Attributes are the "building blocks" of all of creation.

[170] They are: *Chochma*-conceptual knowledge, *Bina*-elucidation, *Da'as*-attachment to the idea

[171] *Z"a* is an acronym that stands for "*z'eir anpin*", which translates as "the small visage" or the "small face." This is kabbalah jargon for the six emotional attributes of G-d as they are modulated to relate to the process of creation. There is a more sublime Divine "emotional" energy that is called "*Arich anpin*" or the "long visage" wherein the emotional surge of Divine energy is unrestricted and too sublime for creation. *Malchus*, which translates literally as "sovereignty" is the seventh

general terms, this verse encompasses the entire spectrum and hierarchy of levels form the most spiritually sublime to the physical heavens and its constituents parts and earth with its constituent parts,[172]—i.e., to the lowly physical world, lower than which nothing exists.

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emotional attribute that is responsible for absorbing the higher six emotional forces and transmitting them into the creation of a lower world. In other words, *Z"a* represents the energy vested in creation and *Malchus* is the power that implements these emotional manifestations of G-d within creation. The three intellectual attributes, by contrast, are beyond the creative process. In other words, their effects are not evident in creation, although they act "behind the scenes" so to speak to enable the process of creation. Just as with the human being, G-d's "emotions" are a product of and derive from His intellectual attributes.

In effect, the first verse of the Torah details the entire Divine mechanism for creation, alluding to both the hidden energy responsible for creation (the intellectual attributes) and the more obvious Divine energy that is "visible" within creation (the emotional attributes).

[172] See Rashi on *Bereishis* 1:14.

Now, after the Torah introduces the description of the entire creation, it proceeds to describe the order through which the process of creation proceeds.

In a following verse the Torah states: "And G-d said let there be light and there was light."[173]

The Ba'al Shem Tov explains:

G=d, through His name *Elokim*, which is His attribute of judgment, contracted His light. This enabled the light to endure and be tolerated by the creation.

Now, the *Zohar*[174] and *Sefer Habahir*[175] cited by commentaries,[176] raises a question on this verse. Why does it say, "and there was light?" It should have stated "and it was so" as the Torah says in subsequent utterances.

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[173] *Bereishis* 1:3.

[174] *Zohar*, volume 1, p. 264a (in the deletions). Volume 2, p. 127b. 167a.

[175] Sec. 57 (190)

[176] See *Ramban* and *Bechaye* on this verse.

The Maggid, in *Or Torah*,[177] explains this on the basis of an exposition in *Raya Mehemna*:[178]

The statement, "Let there be light" refers to *chesed*—the Divine attribute of kindness.

And the statement, "And there was light" refers to *gevurah*—the Divine attribute of judgment and constriction.

This explains why the Torah employs the word "*Vayehi*-and it was." The Talmud states, "Wherever the Torah employs the expression *Vayehi* it is always an expression of distress and anguish."[179]

Thus the Torah states: "***Vayehi Or***-And there was light. The creation of this light was attenuated by the process of *tzimtzum* which appears to be distressful for the world.[180]

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[177] 2:2.

[178] See *Zohar,* volume 2 167a. *Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun* 30 (74a).

[179] *Megillah* 10b.

[180] Distress is a condition where one's energy—physical or emotional—is depleted. The process of *tzimtzum*,

Thus in addition to the first *tzimtzum* that is indicated by the usage of the name *Elokim* in the verse "and G-d (*Elokim*) said let there be light," there is a second process of *tzimtzum* which is represented by the word *vayehi.* This second *tzimtzum* introduced a new light—a light of *gevurah*, (which was different from the light that was indicated originally by the declaration: "Let there be light—namely the light of *chesed*. And it is for this reason that it does not say "and it was so," but rather "and there was light."[181])

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which reduces the flow of Divine energy—albeit so the world would not be overwhelmed by it, nevertheless—causes a loss of that energy and the world can thus be said to be in distress. Indeed, the Hebrew word for distress *tzoroh* is also related to the word *tzar*-constricted.

[181] In other words: This verse that describes the process of creation includes two separate expressions that connote two separate modes of constriction of G-d's light. The first—alluded to in the name *Elokim*—is where G-d withdraws His light, and is marked by the **absence** of the powerful Divine light. The second process of *tzimtzum*—alluded to in the word *Vayehi*—represents the second *tzimtzum* that is characterized,

Generally speaking, the two aforementioned movements of the Animal Soul derive from these two constricting forces:

From the constricting power (*tzimtzum)* that withholds and conceals the intensity of G-d's light—implied in the words, "and G-d (*Elokim*) said"—derives the cold indifference to spiritual matters,[182] albeit after infinite levels of devolution.[183]

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not by the absence of light but, by the introduction of a new light; one that is more compatible with the limits of the world—instead of the light of *chesed*, the light of *gevurah* is generated. As the Rebbe will explain shortly, these two forms of *tzimtzum*-concealment-constriction are the spiritual counterparts to the two effects of the Animal Soul's spirit of folly.

[182] It is easily understood how concealment of the spiritual intensity can render someone cold to spirituality. It does not explain, however, the obsession with materialism and worldly pleasures. For this to happen there must be a second form of *tzimtzum,* which the Rebbe addresses shortly.

[183] The Rebbe is making it clear that the indifference to spirituality is not a direct consequence of the *tzimtzum*. In order for the constriction of the intense Divine light

Subsequent to this *tzintzum* the Torah states: "And there was light," which refers to a level of light the world can tolerate. This light is modulated in such a fashion as to allow it to be accepted by the world. This suggests that this light can relate in some manner to the physical to the extent that the physical can be discerned within the light.[184] This will lead to undesirable passion because the light is obfuscated. And one does not see the light, merely the physical manifestation of it.[185]

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to yield negative results it must undergo infinite measures of transformation and devolution, where the root of this process is no longer discernible. This can be compared to the tree that emerges from one seed.

[184] The Rebbe seems to be saying that the spiritual light that is vested within creation after it undergoes the second *tzimtzum* acquires some of the characteristics of the world to which it gives life.

[185] Once the light is so constrained and concealed it allows for the possibility of the person becoming enamored with the material world. The rationale behind this is that the second *tzimtzum* not only conceals the intensity of the light, it enables the substitution of one form of light for another. As will be explained in the next chapter, it substitutes the light of *chesed*, with the

IV.

"G-d has made one opposite the other"[186] This suggests that just as there exists these two movements in the realm of holiness so too do they exist in the realm of *kelipah* (the realm where holiness is concealed).[187]

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light of *gevurah* which is characterized by its intensity. And since this light has become tainted by the physical world that conceals its spiritual radiance its intensity is channeled into passion for material things.

[186] *Koheles* 7:14. See *Tanya*, chapter 6. *Iggeres Hakodesh* sec. 2, End of *Kuntres Achcron*.

[187] Referring to all that exists that is devoid of overt holiness, including outright evil. This term is the Kabbalistic term for evil, inasmuch as evil is seen as nothing more than the obstruction of the G-dly good. Included in the category of *kelipah* are also neutral things and the Jewish Animal Soul. Unless we use these neutral items and our Animal Soul for holy objectives they too obstruct the G-dly reality of existence. However, these neutral forms of *kelipah* are called *kelipas nogah,* because, as the word *nogah* suggests, these do allow some light to shine through them. The shell is translucent. They have redeeming value and can be salvage for good and G-dly goals. See Tanya *Chapters 6-*

And just as it was explained, specifically, of the Animal Soul of a Jew that derives from *kelipas nogah*-the translucent *kelipah*[188], so too *kelipah* in general can be divided into two movements: the passion in one area and indifference in another.

Likkutei Torah, parshas Nitzavim[189] explains that, generally speaking there are two obstacles to spiritual growth: The first derives from the *chesed* mode of *kelipah*, which is responsible for indifference that prevents one from toiling to do good. The second mode of *kelipah* derives from *gevurah* that is characterized by its intense passion

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*8. Now, t*he very existence of *kelipah* is a theological mystery as to how it comes about; how can something contrary to G-d's will exist and thrive? Chassidic thought, based on the teachings of Kabbalah, explain that there are actually two processes that enable *kelipah*, this obstructing force, to thrive. In this chapter the Rebbe will explain these two sources of energy that give *kelipah* its existence and that parallel the two obstructive forces of the Animal Soul discussed above.

[188] See preceding footnote.

[189] 51d.

that causes one to engage in undesirable and even illicit behavior.

The foregoing analysis enables us to understand the paradoxical dynamic regarding the very existence of *kelipah*.

The *Mitteler Rebbe*,[190] in his discourse concerning the Jewish Midwives[191] expounds on the citation from *Etz Chaim*[192] that the precincts of *kelipah* are situated between the inner light and the encompassing light; between the "linear" precincts and the "spherical" precincts;[193] facing the inner

[190] "The Middle Rabbi"—Rabbi Dovber of Lubavitch

[191] *Toras Chaim*, *Shemos* 42b ff.

[192] Sha'ar 42b ff.

[193] The "inner precincts" are the levels of G-dly energy that seek to be internalized within each world and level of creation. This level is also called "*yosher*-a straight line" because like a vertical line it moves progressively downward. Similarly, this light moves from level to level, attenuating and modulating the light to conform to a successively lower level. The "spherical precincts" (or "encompassing light"), by contrast, refer to the utterly transcendent and elusive levels of Divine light that

light and with their backs to the encompassing light.[194]

As explained there and, at greater length, in the discourse entitled: "And I have given you one

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cannot be internalized. In relation to this light—that is also referred to as *"Igulim"*—everything is equal.

[194] The meaning of this cryptic statement is that as will be explained in the text the *kelipos* have two energy sources: The first is to look for nourishment from the internalizing forces of holiness. The second source is to derive their nourishment from the transcendent forces, as will be explained in the text shortly. The difference between these two options is that to derive form the internalizing source, the *kelipos* must have some modicum of respect for and subservience to G-d. The other option, by contrast, allows them to thrive no matter how rebellious and evil they become, because relative to that transcendent level everything—good and evil—are equal.

However, the *kelipos* cannot "look this transcendent light in the face," because that would be too powerful a light and would "blind" them. Thus, the Arizal states that they **face** the inner light and have their **backs** to the encompassing light.

portion more than your brothers" in *Torah Or*[195]*:* the *kelipos* were created and are nurtured to maintain their existence, in two ways:

The first method is through the myriad of contractions of the inner or internalizing light to the point where the light is so constricted that the *kelipos* can draw, albeit, a small, measure of sustenance.

The second and primary source of sustenance for the *kelipos*—alluded to in the verse "If you shall rise like an eagle.."[196]—is from the "spherical precincts." This refers to the encompassing and transcendent areas which can tolerate even the *kelipos*. This is hinted in the verse: "The spider you can take with your hands, yet is she in the king's palaces."[197] In these the physical and spiritual are

[195] 102b ff.

[196] *Ovadiah* 1:4. This intimates that the *kelipos* rise to the highest levels to receive their sustenance unchallenged.

[197] *Mishlei* 30:28. See *Bereishis Rabbah*, end of #66. *Emek Hamelech*, *Sha'ar* 6, chapter 14. *Sha'ar* 9, chapter 98.

equal. Concerning this level it is said, "If you have sinned, what do you do against Him? And if your transgressions be multiplied, what do you do to Him?[198] These forces of *kelipah* can therefore raise themselves to that level.

These two sources of the existence of the *kelipos* are the basis of the two modalities:

From the root of *kelipos* that comes from the light that is detached and transcends all, one develops icy indifference to matters of holiness. And from the inner and internalizing light from which they draw sustenance they develop a fiery passion for worldly matters.[199]

The point here is that precisely because it is the king's palace and therefore so vast and transcendent, even a lowly spider can find for itself a comfortable niche. Similarly, from the vantage point of the transcendent and encompassing light, even the *kelipos* can find a place to exist and thrive.

[198] *Iyov* 35:6-7.

[199] The explanation for this is that when one derives his or her energy from a spiritual perch that has little regard for positive or negative action since this level is

V.

Now the goal is for us to transform the folly of the "other side." This we accomplish through Torah and Mitzvos. Thus, it follows, that they two possess two elements that parallel the two elements within *kelipah.*

Our Sages stated: "I have created the *Yetzer Hara*- evil impulse, and I created Torah for it as spices."[200]

Now, Torah, in its pristine state is utterly elusive, "it is hidden from eyes of all living;"[201] "Then I was

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so distant from and transcends either, the person develops a sense of disregard for anything spiritual. Spirituality has no value just as physicality has no value in that context. If this influence is dominant than the person maintains an "I don't care about anything" attitude.

[200] *Kiddushin* 30b. The simple meaning of this statement is that Torah is the antidote to our evil impulse. The usage of the word "spices" is explained elsewhere: Torah does not destroy our impulses it "spices" them by transforming them into a good impulse.

[201] *Iyov* 28:21.

by Him...all delight."[202] Yet, Torah also possesses the ability to be a spice-antidote to the *Yetzer Hara*.

The same can be said of Mitzvah observance. Notwithstanding the fact that they are **His** statutes and **His** judgments,[203] nevertheless Mitzvos also possess the power to refine us, as our Midrashic Sages declare: "Does G-d care if we slaughter an animal from neck or from the nape of the neck? Mitzvos were given to us only to refine the creatures,"[204] as the Rambam expounds on this issue at length in his Guide for the Perplexed.[205]

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[202] *Mishlei* 8:30. These two verses describe Torah as G-d's "personal" delight, elusive from us. Yet, Torah also possesses the quality of dealing with the *Yetzer Hara*-the evil impulse.

[203] See end of Psalm 147:19.

[204] *Tanchuma, Shemini* 7. *Bereishis Rabbah*, 44a. The Midrash states emphatically that the Mitzvos are not for G-d's sake but for our sake, despite the fact that they are ascribed to Him exclusively. This points to the same duality that exists within Torah that parallels the duality within the *kelipos*-the spirit of folly, which Torah and Mitzvos were designed to change and transform.

[205] Part III, chapter 32 ff.

From all of the above it is clear that Torah and Mitzvos also possess these two elements. And for this reason it is said in relation to Torah, "G-d came from Sinai, and rose from Seir to them, He shined forth from mount Paran…[206] Seir and Paran represent all of the *kelipos* and nations of the world.[207] And. More specifically, they parallel the two ways the *kelipos* manifest themselves; through coldness and through passion, as explained above[208] These two forms of *kelipah* are represented by Seir and Paran or Esav and Yishmael.

Yishmael personified the *chesed*-kindness form of *Kelipah*, whereas Esav personified its *gevurah* characteristic.

And it is to these forms of *Kelipah* that the Torah states, "G-d came from Sinai and shined from Seir." As the Midrash explains, G-d took the Torah and

[206] *Beracha* 33:2.

[207] *Or HaTorah, Devarim* p. 15. *Beracha* p. 1840 (based on *Likkutei Torah, Nitzavim* there).

[208] Based on *Likkutei Torah* ibid.

offered it to each and every nation and language.[209] (In another source[210] it mentions Esav and Yishmael specifically.)

Chassidus[211] addresses the question, why did G-d offer the Torah to all the nations if they did not accept it? The answer is that this empowered the Jewish people to refine and elevate all the nations of the world.[212] This is consistent with the exposition in *Toras Chaim* on this week's parsha[213] commenting on the words "When Pharaoh sent the nation away."[214] The fact that it was Pharaoh who

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[209] *Tanchuma, Beracha* 4. *Avodah Zarah* 2b. Zohar III, 193a.

[210] *Sifri a*nd Rashi, *Beracha* ibid.

[211] *Or HaTorah, Beracha,* cited above.

[212] The very fact that G-d offered them the Torah provided them with some connection to it and its refining qualities, so that they would be receptive to the process of refinement when the Jewish people practiced these Mitzvos.

[213] *Beshallach* 174a.

[214] *Beshallach* 13:17.

sent and liberated the Jewish nation is symbolic of the refinement of Egypt.

This then is the deeper meaning of "when Pharaoh sent the nation away." It suggests that Pharaoh himself went along with the nation.[215] This implies that they took everything out of Egypt, as it says in a preceding verse, "and you shall empty out Egypt."[216]

From all of the above it is clear that Torah itself comprises these two aforementioned elements. The Torah, therefore, comprises both the right and the

[215] In the Hebrew text the word "*es*" precedes the words "the nation." The word "*es*" is often translated as "with." Hence the verse now reads: "When Pharaoh sent **with** the nation," to suggest that Pharaoh—and Egypt whom he represented—accompanied the Jews in their liberation.

[216] *Shemos* 3:22. See also *Bo* 12:36: "And they emptied out Egypt." This provides additional support that the Torah was intended to refine the world. And despite the fact the refinement of Egypt occurred prior to the giving of the Torah, nevertheless it is still connected to Torah since the entire saga of the Exodus was a preparation for the giving of the Torah.

left. The Torah was given from G-d's "right" as it says, "From His right hand." And immediately after that it adds, "a fiery law given to them"[217] indicating that Torah also contains an element of fire, which is associated with the left.[218]

These two elements of Torah are mentioned in this verse in the context of Seir and Paran because they protect, refine and elevate these two nations.

The same duality can be found with regard to Mitzvos, the commandments. Mitzvos are divided into the two categories of prescriptive and

[217] *Beracha* 33:2. This is the conclusion of the verse in which G-d comes from Seir and Paran. As will be explained shortly these two elements of Torah correspond to the two nations of Seir and Paran.

[218] Left and right correspond to the two attributes of *chesed* and *gevurah*, kindness and severity respectively. The right hand, which is the more dominant hand is the giving hand, while the left withholds, a gesture of *gevurah*. Similarly, water which sustains life is a metaphor for *chesed,* whereas fire, with its destructive power is suggestive of *gevurah*.

proscriptive commandments.[219] These two categories correspond to the two elements that they refine. The Tzemach Tzedek,[220] explains the concept of a "double edged sword"[221] based on the discourse concerning the Hebrew Midwives[222] that the *kelipos* derive their sustenance in two ways: either by facing the internalizing light and by having their backs to the encompassing light. In other words, either by the exalted nature of G-d's light or by the light that is contracted by way of the *tzimtzum*. To prevent the flow of energy to *kelipos* in any of these two channels, the Mitvzos too possess two movements, the prescriptive and proscriptive. The prescriptive Mitzvos are designed

[219] Prescriptive are the things we are required to do such as giving Tzedakah. Proscriptive are the things we are commanded to desist from such as theft. These are the dos and the don'ts. They are frequently referred to as "positive" and "negative" Mitzvos.

[220] *Or HaTorah*, *Parshas Vayechi*, P. 429a ff. in his notes on the discourse s.v. *V'ani nasati lecha shechem echad al achecha*, published in the addenda to *Torah Or*.

[221] *Tehillim* 149:6.

[222] Cited and discussed above in chapter 4.

specifically to affect the physical world, while the proscriptive commandments are geared to enable us to rise above it.[223]

VI.

Now, since our efforts are divided into two modalities, there must also be two corresponding modalities within the world that we are enjoined to affect.

To understand this concept, we must preface the Rebbe MaHarash's discourse entitled *Mi Kamocha*

[223] When we do a prescriptive Mitzvah, such as giving Tzedakah, we shape and mold the world into the ideal world G-d had intended it to be, rather than the world the *kelipos* would allow for it to become. This engaging aspect of Mitzvos counters the way *kelipos* are recipients of the G-dly energy that engages and is internalized within the world.

When we refrain from transgressing by observing the proscriptive Mitzvos we thereby allow ourselves to be withdrawn from the world that beckons us to engage it in unholy ways. This power of resistance and detachment neutralizes the aspect of the *kelipos* that thrive on the detached nature of G-dly light.

bo'eileim Havaye[224] (which was one of the discourses he recited every two or three years as a way of purifying the world, a point that was revealed by the *Ba'al HaHilula*, as is well known[225]), where he explains these two elements as they are manifested in the world.

The world was created *creatio ex nihilo*, creation of something out of nothing. This negates the manner of creation of cause to effect. No matter how many

[224] *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5629, p. 148 ff. See also *Hemshech*, *Mayim Rabim* 5636, p. 158. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5643, p. 95 ff. *Hemshech 5666* p. 432. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5681 p. 107. *Basi L'Gani* 5734, and discourse *Uvnei Yisroel halchu ba'yabasha* 5733 and the subsequent discourse). References cited in the beginning of *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5749, p. 9 (second discourse of *Mi Kamocha).*

[225] *Igros Kodesh,* of *Rebbe Rayatz*, volume 6, p. 267 (cited in *Hayom Yom*, entry 28 Tammuz. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5659, p. 224. Perhaps, the Rebbe emphasizes the point that this discourse was repeated frequently by the Rebbe *MaHarash* to purify the world, because this is the focus of the present discourse—the role of Torah and Mitzvos as agents of purification of the world.

levels of descent and decline from cause to an effect, the final effect is connected to and has something in common with the first cause. In stark contrast, when something physical is created from something spiritual it constitutes the ultimate example of something created out of nothing, as the discourse cites the *Sefer Halkkarim* in this regard.

This explains the phenomenon of this world possessing the combination of two opposites:

On the one hand, the entire process of creation is one where the source of creation is utterly concealed. It cannot even be compared to an endless chain of levels from cause to effect (to the extent that one can use the term "endless" in that context). Creation is out of absolute nothing and naught.[226]

On the other hand, out of this nothingness emerged true existence and not just an illusion of existence. The foregoing discourse (of the Rebbe Maharash) proves that the world is not a mirage,

[226] In other word, the physical world has absolutely no true existence because it reflects nothing of its source.

from the Mishnah in Sanhedrin[227] that states: "Two people were gathering cucumbers [through sorcery], one gathers and is not liable and one gathers and is liable. The one who performs the act is liable; the one who creates an illusion is not liable."

From this we see that even when one performs an act that is contrary to G-d's will—i.e., gathering cucumbers through sorcery, which negates the possibility of ascribing reality of the phenomenon to G-d's will, for this act of gathering cucumbers through sorcery actually causes him to become detached from G-dliness—it is still regarded as a bona fide act. This can be deduced from the Mishnah that considers two scenarios: either it was an illusion or he performed a genuine, and therefore punishable, act. This demonstrates that even when one performs an act that severs one's connection to G-d, the Torah still regards it as real and not an illusion.[228]

[227] 67a.

[228] There are philosophies that maintain that the world we inhabit is an illusion. Other philosophies deny the

The above thus illustrates how our world manifests two contradictory tendencies that parallel the two aforementioned modalities.[229]

VII.

Now, just as we find these two modalities in the world that a Jew is charged with the responsibility to work with, there is also a similar duality within the Jewish people for whom the world was created.[230]

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existence of anything else other than our physical world. Torah, the way Chassidus sheds light on its teachings, embraces the paradox that the world is both *ayin*-nothing and *yesh*-something. Indeed, Chassidus argues, to deny the reality of our world would lessen the validity of Torah that was given to engage and affect the world.

[229] The aspect of creation that is not real—it is something out of absolute nothingness—parallels the transcendent aspect of G-d that does not relate to and engage the world, whereas the aspect of creation that is real and substantive corresponds to the aspect of the Divine that engages the world and is internalized within it.

[230] Chassidic literature elucidates the meaning of the phrase that the world was created for the Jewish people.

This premise will assist us in understanding the words of the Maggid, in *Or Torah*,[231] commenting on the verse "Let us make man in our image..."[232]:

"This means, to use an analogy, a person who has a son, even if the son passes him by and is no longer in his face; nevertheless the image of the son is etched in the father's thoughts. However, if one never had a son, it is untenable to suggest that the image of the son that will be born to him in the future should be etched in his thoughts. He did not yet see him and did not recognize his image. This is the way it is with mortals. For G-d, however, it is possible to say that even before the Jewish people were created that their image was already etched in His thought. This is what it our Sages have said,

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The world's penchant is to obstruct the reality of G-d's existence and to screen His light—for the word *olam*-world means concealment. The role of the Jewish people is to remove that veil and obstruction. And since the world that they have to engage and change is divided into two dimensions, so must they, the agents of change, be so divided.

[231] 2c.

[232] *Bereishis* 1:26.

"Israel arose in thought,"[233] because for G-d the past, present and future are all one."

At first glance his words are difficult to understand. Why does he cite the analogy of mortals and then apply it to G-d? He could have stated at the outset that for G-d past, present and future are equal so that it is possible for the image to be there even before the world was created.

One can suggest that this commentary was written in sequence to an earlier comment[234] where he explains the well-known saying of our Sages (in *Zohar* and Midrash,[235] cited by Rashi at the very beginning of his commentary on the Torah): "The Torah should not have commenced except with 'this month is unto you'[236], why did he reveal to them the account of Creation…"? The *Maggid* explains this by way of a parable of a father who

[233] See *Bereishis Rabbah* 1:4.

[234] *Or Torah* 1:1.

[235] See *Bereishis Rabbah* 1:2. See *Likkutei Sichos,* volume 15, p. 104, n. 41 and in the marginal note there.

[236] *Bo* 12:2

contracts and edits his level of understanding to make small talk with his little son. The father enjoys this experience because his son derives pleasure from this."[237]

Here too we confront a similar difficulty. We can understand why a physical father has a son who is born a child with the limits of a child.[238] However, G-d could have created them as adults from birth. And, indeed, this is the way it actually was with Adam and Eve, as the Midrash states that they were created at the age of twenty.[239] They were adults when they were created.

One can offer the following explanation:

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[237] The *Maggid*'s answer to the question as to why the Torah begins with Genesis is that it represents the process of *tzimtzum*, which was made necessary at creation. The parable of the father lowering his level of understanding to relate to the child is analogous to G-d creating the world with the knowledge of the delight He receives from the delight of the Jewish people, notwithstanding their infantile level.

[238] And therefore the father must lower himself to the level of the child.

[239] *Bereishis Rabbah* 14:7.

Since the purpose of creation was that our service should involve our own initiatives and efforts, there was therefore a need to have the concept of a minor child. This entails the paradox of the need to commence his life's work as a minor, but it must be a minor that is a son. In other words, it was crucial that the son have a connection to his father and then through his own energy develop and mature from childhood to adulthood.[240]

With this premise we can also understand the follow up commentary on the words "Let us make man."[241] Inasmuch as the objective of creation is for human endeavor that involves their own power, he therefore provides an analogy of how this process operates with a mortal down here. In the physical

[240] The paradox here is that G-d wants an entity that is both close (a son) and distant (an infantile child).

[241] The question raised earlier was why the need to provide the analogy of a father and son, and then have to qualify the analogy by stating that G-d does not have the limits of a human father and child. It could have simply explained, as it does in the end, how G-d has the Jewish people etched in His thoughts because past, present and future are equal to Him.

realm, there is first the existence of a son and only afterwards can he be etched in the thoughts of the father. After discussing the process in the physical world he then proceeds to explain how the process works in relation to G-d.

The difference between the two is comparable to the Alter Rebbe's exposition in *Likkutei Torah* concerning the self-sacrifice of a son for his father. Strict Jewish law does not demand of the son to give his life for his father. Your own life takes precedence.[242] This is echoed in the law that one who can retrieve either his own lost object or his father's may give precedence to his own.[243] The rationale for this is that notwithstanding the son's relationship to his father—"a son is the knee of his father[244]—after he is born he becomes an independent person.

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[242] *Bava Metzia* 62a.

[243] Ibid 33a in the Mishnah.

[244] *Yonas Elem*, beginning of Chapter 2. See *Eiruvin* 70b. *Tosphos, Yevamos* 3a, s.v. *mikamei*. *Rashi, Kesubos* 92a, s.v. *kiba'al,* et al.

By contrast, even after Adam was created "in our image and in our likeness"[245] he still remained "truly, an integral part of G-d.[246] Therefore, in relation to G-d there is an obligation to give one's life, not just theoretically but also literally.

Consequently, the Jewish people also possess two states: initially they are likened merely to a small child, or a child of a physical father.[247] Eventually they grow and mature into the adult child; the children of G-d.[248]

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[245] Bereishis 1:26. *Sha'arei Orah*, s.v. *Rani v'simchi,* end of chapter 16 (p. 31a).

[246] *Tanya*, beginning of Chapter 2.

[247] We exist initially as spiritual minors and as physical children of our fathers, with the limitations that that relationship entails, as explained above. The physical relationship—with its limitations—is a metaphor for our spiritual infantile level in our early stages of spiritual development.

[248] Here too, the Rebbe demonstrates that the Jewish people exist on two planes: The first is that they are within the constraints of the world—the minor child. And the second dimension is where they exist as the adult children of G-d. These two levels parallel the two

VIII.

All of the above relates specifically to this lowly physical world. To fulfill G-d's desire to have a dwelling place specifically in the lowliest physical world[249] the soul must descend from the "high roof to the low pit.[250] To clarify why the emphasis on this lowly physical world," we must preface the Rebbe Rashab's discourse (in the *Hemshech* 5672, the discourse entitled *Oteh Or*[251] *and the discourse entitled L'ma'an da'as* of Simchas Torah 5680[252]).

There it is explained that the true appreciation for the infinite gap that exists between G-d and His creation can only be in this physical world. All other manifestations of Divine light that is generated from G-d, no matter how many

aspects of G-d, Torah and Mitzvos: their transcendent level and the level that involves the world and works within its confines.

[249] *Tanchuma Naso* 16. Tanya, beginning of Chapter 36. Et al.

[250] A metaphor employed by the Talmud—*Chagigah* 5b.

[251] Chapter 7 (*Hemshech* 5672, volume 1, p. 11 ff.)

[252] *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5680, p. 50 ff.

gradations of *tzimtzum* that it is subjected to, the light (*Or)* essentially remains analogous to the Luminary (*Ma'or)*, its source. One can therefore imagine that there is some relationship between the Luminary-source and the light that emerges from it; although there is a huge gulf between them they are not incomparable.

By contrast, the creation of the "*keilim*-vessels"[253] are generated in a manner where they are detached from their source. This is particularly true in this physical world where the creation is *ex nihilo.*. There can be no greater something from nothing than there is in the creation of physicality from spirituality. This mode of creation represents the

[253] All of the divine energies that are generated from the Luminary are generated through vessels or instruments that channel the light and color it according to the hue of the vessel. The vessels, unlike the lights, can clearly be recognized as being incomparable to the source. The light, on the other hand, appears to be a perfect reflection of the Luminary since always cleaves to it. With respect to the vessels that are not attached to the source there is no room for that deceptive thought. Certainly, our physical world leaves no room for a misconception of its relationship with its Divine source.

greatest descent involved in the process of creation.[254] And it is entirely distinct from the process of cause and effect.

And it is therefore precisely in this arena that we see the infinite gap between G-d and the world. And once we realize the infinite gap that exists in the physical world we can then extrapolate and apply it (and indeed it has the impact) on the light as well. The effect is that the light feels this gap. In other words, the light detects that it is not only a sampling of the Luminary–source, but it reaches an even more exalted realization—that it is infinitely removed from its Maker, even including the Luminary.[255]

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[254] There is no other form of creation in which the G-dly energy has to "lower" itself to the extent that it must to reach the physical world. It is so utterly removed from and incomparable with its spiritual source.

[255] The Divine emanation of light (*Or)* is a reflection of its source, referred to in Chassidic parlance as the *Ma'or*, translated here as the "Luminary." Although the *Or* is a reflection of the *Ma'or*, there is an infinite gap between them. It thus goes without saying that there is an infinite gap between *Or* and the Essence of G-d, which

It may be suggested that the first source and root of the two modalities that pervades all the levels that were elaborated on above is the fact that the G-dly force within creation comprises two aspects: The Creator and the creation. The duality that exists within the world, and especially within the realm of *kelipos,* emerges from this duality. In addition, this duality also manifests itself in the intermediary state of Torah and Israel, for which the world was created, as it says, "*Bereishis*-in the beginning. This is interpreted to mean **because** of Torah and Israel that are called *reishis*-beginning, the world was created.[256] Inasmuch as we are

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even transcends His role as the *Ma'or*. However, if not for the creation of the physical world that gap would not be noticeable and appreciated since it seems that *Or* is a reflection of, and therefore, related to, and within range of the *Ma'or*. However, when we see the true infinite gap in this physical world it "alerts" us to the fact that everything—including the most sublime level of Divine light (*Or)* is something out of nothing. The Rebbe goes a step further. The recognition that there is an infinite gap between our world and G-d actually has an effect on the way the Divine light sees itself in relation to its source.

[256] Rashi, *Bereishis* 1:1.

discussing G-d in His mode of creation one can postulate that there is the duality of the Creator and the creation. And it may be posited that this is the first root and source for the duality in all of the categories enumerated above.

IX.

All of the above was created, given and revealed to us so that it is ultimately translated into concrete action, which is the essential thing. The goal is for there to be a Jew, who was created for the purpose of serving his Maker,[257] and who succeeds in fulfilling this in actuality; in thought, speech and action. In general terms, it involves both the G-dly soul and the Animal soul; the body and the soul.

With this accomplished, one fulfills his role and mission as a soldier in G-d's army[258] to make a dwelling place for G-d in the lowest world. And this is the meaning of "and He shall dwell forever on

[257] Literally: "I was created to serve my Maker." (Mishnah and *Beraisa*, end of *Kiddushin*.)

[258] *Bo* 12:41.

it."[259] And this is how one generates the return of G-d to His garden-dwelling; to the place where His essence was originally revealed. For the essence of the Shechinah was initially in this lowly world.

However, in the future Messianic Age all of the above will be enhanced exponentially. In that age that G-dly light at the apex of the hierarchy of worlds will change its relationship with the world. In the future the *kav*—even the lowest part of the *kav*—will be attached to the great circle.[260]

All of this will become manifest with the coming of our righteous Moshiach. Then "the glory of G-d will

[259] See beginning of discourse where this verse is explained as a reference to the *tzadikkim* succeeding in bringing the *Shechinah* down to this world.

[260] *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5659, end of p. 110 ff. *Hemshech* 5672, beginning of p. 117. See *Or HaTorah, Bereishis*, 41b. The "Great Circle" refers to the pre-*tzimtzum* light that is utterly transcendent. The *kav* is the liner flow of light that follows the *tzimtzum* and descends progressively down to animate the lowest levels; the farther it descends the more limited it becomes. However, in the Messianic Age, the Great Circle will touch and affect the *kav-line*, even at its lowest point.

be revealed and all flesh shall see it together that the mouth of G-d has spoken."[261] This means that even the physical flesh shall be able to see. As explained in *Sha'ar Ho'Emunah*,[262] that seeing then will be akin to physical vision with eyes of flesh that transcend intellectual vision and even beyond the level of prophetic vision. We already experienced a sampling of this vision at the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. But we will enjoy the full experience of this level with the true and complete Redemption, imminently, with the coming of our righteous Moshiach.

[261] *Yeshayahu* 40:5.

[262] Chapter 25. See *Likkutei Sichos*, volume 9, p. 63.

לעילוי נשמת

הרה"ג הרה"ח אי"א נו"נ עוסק בצ"צ שליח כ"ק אדמו"ר מוהר"ר מנחם מענדל בהר"ר נחום הלוי ע"ה

נלב"ע יו"ד כסלו, תשע"ג

Dedicated to the memory and elevation of the soul of

Rabbi Menachem Mendel ben Harav Nochum Halevi ע"ה

Who passed away on the Tenth of Kislev, 5773

May his soul be bound in the bond of life

ב"ה

BASI L'GANI

MA'AMAR/DISCOURSE OF REBBE
YUD SHEVAT, 5734

Translated and Annotated by

MA'AMARIM OF THE REBBE-BASI L'GANI

Heschel Greenberg

INTRODUCTION

The Alter Rebbe once said that one must live with the times. Contrary to the way it sounds, the Alter Rebbe was not advocating following modern trends and changing with the times by adjusting our Judaism to the changing values and mores of society. In fact, the opposite is true. The Alter Rebbe was referring to the times measured by the Torah. One must seek guidance for our lives from the weekly Torah portion. So if this week we are reading about the Egyptian bondage and Exodus, we must learn lessons concerning our own spiritual bondage and the proper path to Redemption, etc.

Chassidim have added another layer to the notion of "living with the times." There is an expression that the Rebbe mentioned repeatedly: "the Chassidic *Parsha*." He was referring to the study of the discourses of the Alter Rebbe on the weekly Torah portions in his seminal works *Torah Or* and *Likkutei Torah*"

In other words, in addition to the lessons gleaned from the actual narratives and laws of the Torah, we must also glean deeper insights from the wellsprings of Chassidus on those Biblical texts, as they correspond to that particular week.

But the Jewish cycle of time is measured yet another way. In addition to the weekly Torah readings, our year is seasoned with Holidays. We must obviously live with the messages of those Holidays, particularly as they are viewed through the lens of *Chassidus*.

One may add that there are certain seasonal discourses that Chassidim "lived with" with extraordinary devotion. One such discourse—or series of discourses—is *Basi L'Gani.*

The Previous Rebbe issued a discourse entitled *Basi L'Gani* to be studied on the tenth day of Shevat in the year 5710-1950, which was the yahrtzeit of his grandmother, the *Rebbetzin Rivkah*. That day, the Previous Rebbe left us physically as well, and, as a result, this discourse became the final Divine message that was channeled through the Rebbe, the

leader of that generation, to his followers, and indeed to the entire Jewish nation for posterity.

The Rebbe asked of us to study this discourse and review it publically throughout the day of Yud Shevat and study it in the days that lead to Yud Shevat.

From the year 5711—the first *Hilula* of the Previous Rebbe—onward the Rebbe delivered a *Ma'amar*/Chassidic Discourse with the same title of *Basi L'Gani*. Indeed, the recitation of that discourse in the year 5711 was the "sign" that the Rebbe had finally accepted the role of Rebbe after many months of resisting that position of leadership.

Each year the discourse, the Rebbe delivered on Yud Shevat focused and elaborated on one chapter of the Previous Rebbe's Discourse. The original *Ma'amar* (which is actually a series of four discourses) comprises twenty chapters and for twenty years the Rebbe delivered a *Ma'amar* on the chapter that corresponded to that year. In the year 5730, the Rebbe concluded a series of annual *Basi L'Gani* discourses, elaborating on the final twentieth

chapter. There was some suspense as to what the Rebbe would do the next year.

In the year 5731, the Rebbe started a new series of discourses beginning again with a *Ma'amar* on the first chapter of the original *Ma'amar*. It was a completely new discourse, not a repetition of the one he said in 5711. This custom continued until—and through—the year 5748, when the Rebbe delivered a discourse on the 18th chapter. For reasons that were not divulged, the Rebbe did not continue this custom for the years beyond 5748. However, he did edit and submit for publication some of the earlier discourses, including the one of 5732. This was one of the last discourses the Rebbe edited for publication for Yud Shevat 5752.

In short, Chassidim were asked to live with—and they did live—with *Basi L'Gani* in general and the corresponding chapter in particular. This year 5774 (the fourth cycle) we live with the discourses that the Rebbe said in the years 5714 and 5734.

In the year 5734, Yud Shevat coincided with Shabbos. That year the Rebbe delivered the *Basi L'Gani Ma'amar* twice. The first discourse was

delivered on Shabbos and was transcribed by a group of scholars, who are known as "*chozrim*-reviewers," who reconstructed it from memory. That night, the Rebbe delivered another discourse on the same chapter, albeit with significant additions and variations. Although, the central theme of the two discourses is the same, there are many details that each discourse adds. As noted, these discourses are based on a listener's account and were not reviewed or edited by the Rebbe.

I have chosen to translate the second discourse that was taken and transcribed from the tape ensuring a greater degree of accuracy. However, it should be noted that, the version that this translation is based on cannot be compared to a *Ma'amar* that the Rebbe would personally edit and issue for publication. Any inconsistencies, errors etc. should therefore be attributed to the transcriber or/and the translator.

Most of the references cited in the footnotes were supplied by the publishers of these discourses ("*Va'ad L'Hafotzas Sichos*") and, more recently, "*Lahak"* (which published a somewhat edited version of the *Ma'amar*) and were reproduced here

in the translation. Additional explanatory footnotes were added by the translator to help clarify some of the concepts in the *Ma'amar*. These comments are my humble attempt at making some of the arcane concepts somewhat more accessible to the average reader. I cannot vouch for their accuracy.

Some of the differences between this Discourse and the one preceding it will be noted in the footnotes.

I am publishing this translation on the occasion of my birthday ישראל העשיל בן בילא מלכה (on *Yud-Gimmel Shevat*), the birthday of my daughter חי' שרה בת לאה תחי' (on *Yud Aleph Shevat*) and my son לוי יצחק בן לאה שיחי' (on *Chof-Beis Shevat*)

It is my fervent prayer that the study of this *Ma'amar* will bring blessing to all of the above for a year of success, materially and spiritually, long life, good health, Nachas from children etc., and, most importantly, it should hasten the time when we will be reunited with the *Ba'al Hilulo* and our Rebbe, with the true and complete Redemption by מלכנו משיחנו, תיכף ומי"ד ממ"ש. אכי"ר!

Heschel Greenberg

5 Shevat, 5774

Buffalo, New York

BS"D.

MOTZO'EI SHABBOS KODESH, PARSHAS BESHALLACH, YUD SHEVAT (SECOND DISCOURSE), 5734

I have come into My garden, My sister, My bride.[263]

The *Ba'al Hahilula*[264]—in the discourse issued for his *histalkus,*[265] *cites the Midrash, Shir HaShirim Rabbah, on this verse*[266]:

[263] *Shir Hashirim* 5:1. The entire book of *Shir Hashirim* is a metaphor that describes the mutual love between G-d and the Jewish people. The Midrash's comments cited here refer to the construction of the Mishkan, the portable Sanctuary the Jews built in the desert. This Sanctuary was intended as a place where G-d's presence would be felt in this physical world. And it is concerning G-d's revelation in this Sanctuary that the Midrash applies the words, "I have come to My garden," implying that G-d was returning to the place He originally inhabited.

[264] The word *Hilula* (which means wedding) is used to describe the passing of a *Tzadik* at which time the soul

"The words 'My garden' mean 'My chamber,' the place where My essence was originally revealed.

For the essence of the *Shechinah* (the Divine presence) was originally revealed below.[267] However,

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reunites with its Maker, the phrase *Ba'al HaHilula* literally means "the master of the wedding;" which, in Chassidic parlance, refers to the *tzadik* whose passing we are observing.

[265] Literally: "His ascent"; a term used for the passing of a righteous person.

[266] *Basi L'gani* 5710 (*Sefer Ha'Ma'amarim* 5710, p. 111 onward). This discourse was submitted by the *Ba'al HaHilula* to be studied on *Yud Shevat* 5710, the day of his *Histalkus*. Although it was originally dedicated by the Previous Rebbe to his grandmother, the Rebbetzin Rivkah of blessed memory who passed away on Yud Shevat, it was understood that this discourse was his last direct message to us.

[267] See *Bereishis Rabbah 19:7.*

The term "Below" refers to our physical, corporeal world, the last and lowliest of all the various spiritual worlds. Spiritual worlds are characterized by their awareness of and devotion to G-d. The spiritual worlds are different gradations of spiritual consciousness. Unlike the spiritual worlds, the physical world which we inhabit

the sin of the Tree of Knowledge and subsequent sins—caused the Shechinah to withdraw from below and ascend upward. This process was ultimately reversed through the efforts of the *tzadikim*-righteous individuals, beginning with Abraham ("Abraham was alone"[268]) who merited and brought the Shechinah down from the seventh heaven to the sixth heaven. And through the efforts of subsequent *tzadikim* until and including Moses—who was the

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can be oblivious to its true G-dly nature. For this reason it is referred to as the "lowest" or "lowliest" of all the worlds.

In the first Ma'amar of *Yud Shevat* 5734 the Rebbe quotes the Midrashic statement, "The world was created as a completed world" (*Beresihis Rabbah* 14:7) to support the premise that the Divine presence was originally in this world. The Rebbe then offers the rationale for this: The reason for creation is that G-d desired a dwelling place in the lowliest of worlds."

[268] *Yechezkel* 33:24. This verse underscores Abraham's uniqueness. The Rebbe is intimating that the power to reverse the process of G-d's withdrawal from the world was attributed to Abraham's uniqueness; standing single handedly against the entire world to promote pure Monotheism.

seventh generation, and "all sevens are beloved"[269]—the Shechinah was drawn from the first heaven back down to earth.

This is the meaning of the verse: "The righteous will inherit the land and they will dwell on it eternally."[270] "The righteous" refers to all of the Jewish people, as it says, "All your nation are righteous."[271] They "draw down" and effectuate the dwelling[272] on this earth of "the One who dwells forever."[273] This, they accomplish by their efforts at

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[269] *Vayikra Rabbah* 29:11.

[270] *Tehillim* 37, 29.

[271] *Yeshayahu* 60:21. See *Sanhedrin* beginning of *Chelek.*

[272] See *Maharzav on Bereishis Rabbah ad loc. Matnas Kehunah* and *Maharzav on Bamidbar Rabbah* 13:2.

[273] I.e., the *tzadikim* cause the Divine presence to once more be revealed in our physical world.

The simple meaning of the verse is that the righteous will be rewarded by living forever on the earth. The inner dimension of this verse is that the righteous will inherit the land—Gan Eden or paradise—because they cause the One who dwells forever to dwell upon the earth.

iskafia s*itra achara*-suppressing the "other side,"[274] which leads to *ishapcha sitra achara*-the transformation of the "other side."

This is consistent with the statement of the *Zohar:* "When the *sitra achara* is subdued it elicits the glory of G-d in all the worlds."[275] The phrase "in all the worlds" implies that this light is equal in all the worlds; it is the level of *Sovev kol almin*-the Encompassing light. The *Zohar* refers to this exalted effusion of light as *istalek*[276] which implies that it is

[274] "The other side" is the Kabbalistic terminology for evil. This suggests that evil is not an independent existence. It is "merely" the other side of holiness. In addition, it implies that there is no intermediary between good and evil. If it is not on the side of holiness it is, by definition, on the "other side" and is evil. See *Tanya* Chapter 6.

[275] See *Tanya* Chapter 27 and *Likkutei Torah*, beginning of *Parsha Pikudei* (taken from *Zohar*, II 128b). See also there 67b. 184a. *Torah Or, Vayakhel* 89d. *Likkutei Torah*, *Parshas Chukas* 65c.

[276] Usually translated as "departed" but is more precisely translated as "ascended" implying that the Divine light generated by *iskafia* is of a level that relates equally to

a transcendent level of light.[277] This level is expressed in the words, "He who dwells for eternity, exalted and holy."[278]

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all levels because it is utterly transcendent. See *Torah Or* end of *Vayakhel.*

[277] G-d's energy or light manifests itself in two modalities. The first, referred to as *Memale kol almin*, is the immanent force of G-d that is modulated to conform to the status and needs of each and every creature. It represents the internalizing light of G-d. By contrast, the modality known as "*Sovev kol almin"* (literally "surrounds all worlds," but, more precisely "encompasses all worlds") is the transcendent Divine light, in relation to which all worlds are equal. This light cannot be absorbed by the highest of worlds, neither are the lowest precincts indifferent to it. This transcendent aspect of G-d is revealed below when we suppress and subdue the negative forces.

[278] *Shabbos Shacharis* liturgy. This reference speaks of G-d's dwelling and refers to G-d as "exalted and holy" indicating G-d's transcendence. This supports the retranslation of the verse cited above that refers to how *tzadikim* cause the dwelling of the transcendent aspect of G-d to be revealed below.

This explains why, after the Torah was given and the Shechinah descended to the earth, there was a command to construct a *Mishkan*-portable Sanctuary and *Mikdash*-Sanctuary *("Mikdash* is called *Mishkan."[279])* as it is stated, "Make for Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in them."[280]

In the Mishkan the most essential service was the service of *korbonos*-sacrifices. The idea of a *korban* is to offer all of one's faculties and senses to the One above.[281] Indeed the extent of the elevation of a

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[279] *Eiruvin* 2a. Although Mishkan usually refers to the portable Sanctuary in the desert and Mikdash to the permanent structure in Jerusalem, the Talmud states that, nevertheless, these terms can be used interchangeably.

[280] *Terumah*25:8.

[281] See *Sefer Habhir* #46 (109). See also *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5709 p. 27.

The very word *Korban* implies bringing something close. The physical process of the Korban involved burning an animal on the Altar where the meat of the Korban literally is consumed by and ascends in the fire and smoke. This parallels the spiritual dynamic of causing one's faculties and senses to be consumed in the G-dly passion and elevated and brought near the One above.

Korban is that it reaches the "secret of the *Ein Sof*."[282]

This process of elevation through the sacrifices generates a reciprocal effusion of light from above that is extended downward. This "from above to below" process is expressed in the words,[283] "a pleasant fragrance," which our Sages explain to mean that: "G-d says, it causes me a spirit of contentment that I spoke and My Will was carried out," [284] referring to an elicitation of the Divine down below to dwell in the Mishkan and Mishkan

[282] See *Zohar* 2:239a. 3:26b – cited in the original *Basi L'Gani* discourse Chapter 18.

[283] Mentioned in *Vayikra* 1:10 and in multiple verses as G-d's response to the sacrifices.

[284] *Toras Kohanim*, cited by *Rashi*. This implies that sacrifices were not just a unilateral endeavor which involves our offering to G-d. There is also a response from G-d who expresses His satisfaction with our offering. In addition, the word for pleasure, "*nachas,*" also has the connotation in Hebrew as "descent," indicating G-d's "drawing down" of Divine energy below in response to our ascent above through our offerings.

("The Mishkan is called Mikdash"[285]), and within each and every Jew, as the Torah states:[286] "I will dwell **in them**."[287]

The original Discourse[288] continues:

This premise (that the role of the Mishkan is to effectuate *iskafia* and *ishapcha*) also elucidates the verse (written in the context of the command to

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[285] *Eiruvin* 2a.

[286] In the verse cited above that begins with the words: "Make for Me a Sanctuary." Our Sages questioned the plural form "in them" and explained that through the Mishkan-Mikdash the Divine dwells in each and every Jew. In the series of *Basi L'Gani* discourses the emphasis is on how we can create our own Mikdash to bring the Divine presence within ourselves, as will be addressed shortly.

[287] See *Likkutei Torah,* (beginning of *Parshas Naso* 20b, et al) where this exegesis is attributed to "Our Sages." See *Reishis Chochma, Sha'ar HoAhavah,* near the beginning of Chapter 6. *Alshich* on the verse cited in the text. *Shaloh* 69a. 201a. *Chelek Torah Shebiksav, Terumah* 325b. 326b. See *Likkutei Sichos* Volume 26, p. 173, n. 45.

[288] Chapter 3.

"Make for me a Sanctuary"): "You shall make the beams for the Mishkan of *Shittim* (acacia) wood standing upright."[289] The word "*Shittim*" is cognate to the word for straying or deviating from the straightforward path.[290] It is also connected to the word *shtus*-folly as in the statement: "A person does not transgress unlike a spirit of *shtus*-folly entered him."[291]

To explain: The Mishkan's objective for the fulfillment of "And I will dwell in them" is achieved by *iskafia*-suppressing the *sitra achara*, which will ultimately lead to its transformation-*ishapcha*. To facilitate the Mishkan becoming a dwelling place for G-d—"in them"—one must take "*shittim*-the spirit of folly," suppress and transform it; and thereby transform darkness into light. This entails suppressing one's deviation downward from the

[289] *Terumah* 26:15.

[290] This subject is discussed in greater detail in the original *Basi L'Gani* discourse, chapter 3 (*Sefer HaMa'amarim* p. 114ff.) See also *Siddur (Im Dach)*, *Drushei Chasunah* 128a. *Basi L'Gani* 5658. *Kuntres Hamayon 26:1.*

[291] *Sotah* 3a.

straightforward path of holiness, and even transforming it into a state of "holy folly"' i.e., deviating upward from the straightforward and conventional path of holiness; transcending logic and knowledge. This is how we bring about the fulfillment of "And I will dwell in them."

II

In Chapter four[292] [the chapter that corresponds to this year[293]], the discourse continues to elaborate on the means through which one achieves this service of, initially, suppressing and negating the deviation from the straightforward path of Torah and Mitzvos, by returning to it, and then reaching beyond that path by "deviating"—in the positive sense of the word—upward to the level of "holy folly," a path that transcends reason and logic.

[The above addresses the question, how could one who strayed from the proper path return to the

[292] *Sefer HaMa'amarim* ibid. p. 116ff.

[293] *Sefer HaMa'amarim Melukat* Volume 2 p. 238, "*pesach davar"* and f. 2. and P. 257. See Translator's Introduction.

path of Torah and Mitzvos and even go beyond the straightforward path that transcends reason?]

The explanation given there is based on the abovementioned premise that "a person cannot transgress unless a spirit of folly enters him." However, this spirit of folly can only conceal the G-dly soul's emotions. It cannot conceal the essence of the G-dly soul. Thus, when a person makes an effort to reveal and express the essence of his G-dly soul it dispels the concealment, and enables one to ultimately go beyond the norm of reason and logic.[294]

This matter still needs further clarification. How could any part of the G-dly soul, even its emotions, be concealed? Tanya states:[295] "The second soul in

[294] See below Chapter 5.

[295] Chapter 2.

Israel is a part of G-d above."[296] The Alter Rebbe adds the word "*mamosh*-actually."[297]

It is therefore problematic how could there be anything in this world that can conceal and obstruct, not to mention oppose, the Divine soul which is G-dly, even if it is merely its emotional side?

Now a similar question has been asked about the world, in general,[298] the word for which "*olam*" implies concealment:[299] How can it conceal and

[296] *Iyov* 31:2.

[297] *Mamosh.* This additional word is meant to convey the idea that the words of Iyov were not hyperbole or only to be understood figuratively.

[298] That conceals the Divine within it.

The Rebbe is introducing here a similar question about how existence, in general, can conceal its G-dly nature. The Rebbe will then demonstrates that the concealment of the G-dly Soul by the Animal Soul poses an even more powerful challenge.

[299] *Likkutei Torah Shlach* 37d. *Biurei Hazohar* of *Tzemach Tzedek Volume 1) p. 355*

obstruct G-dliness?[300] The Alter Rebbe (in *Sha'ar Hayichud Va'he'emunah*[301]) explains that just as creation *ex nihilo,* which derives from G-d's attribute of *Gedulah*-greatness and is therefore beyond the grasp of the human mind, since G-d and His attributes are truly one, so too no creature can fathom G-d's attribute of *Gevurah*, the attribute responsible for *tzimtzum,* the contraction and concealment of His creative power that prevents G-d's creative power from being revealed to His creatures.

And while we are able to comprehend intellectually how the creation was created by its Creator it does not extend to our feelings. For if it was perceived by us we would feel that our existence is an extension

[300] The question is: How can something obstruct its very life-force and source of its existence? The Rebbe will cite the Alter Rebbe's answer to this question and argue that it does not answer the question about the Animal Soul's ability to conceal the Divine Soul.

[301] *Tanya* part 2, Chapter 4.

of the life force and spirituality analogous to the effusion of the ray and light of the sun.[302]

[Moreover, as explained in *Sha'ar Hayichud Vo'he'emunah,*[303] there is a more precise analogy [for the relationship of the world to its Divine Life-force]: It is akin to the light of the sun when it is still **within** the orb of the sun. In that state it cannot even be referred to as a being; it is absolute naught and nothingness.[304]]

G-d's ability to mask the life force, so that no creature is overwhelmed and nullified,[305] is indeed a manifestation of His strength and omnipotence.[306]

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[302] In relation to the sun, which is clearly not a separate entity from its source.

[303] Chapter 3.

[304] Our existence is more than just an extension of G-d's existence. We are totally subsumed within Him and therefore, it is only G-d's power of *Gevurah* and *tzimtzum* that enables us to be totally oblivious to our true Divine existence.

[305] If G-d's power would be evident we would be totally overwhelmed by it and that would make it impossible for us to function, let alone have free choice to do right

Now, if with regard to the world there is a need to clarify how it is possible for its vivifying light to be concealed, how much more so does the Animal Soul's ability to obstruct the G-dly Soul beg for clarification.

Moreover, whereas, with respect to the obstructive nature of the world, we can understand that it derives from G-d's attribute of *Gevurah*, this clarification is inadequate to explain the Animal's

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or wrong. It would, of course, eliminate the entire purpose of existence, which is for us to make a dwelling place for G-d by our actions.

[306] Literally: "These are indeed His strengths!" This is an expression based on the Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni* # 1071.) and Talmud (*Yoma* 69b) describing the way the Men of the Great Assembly restored the usage of the praise for G-d as "mighty." Daniel ceased using this praise because he argued "strangers are enslaving His children, where are His powers?" The Men of the Great Assembly responded to this challenge: "These are indeed His strengths! He restrains His will and shows how He can delay venting His anger." This expression thus captures the idea that G-d's ability to conceal His strength is actually the greatest manifestation of His power

Soul obscuring of the G-dly Soul, for it is more than just concealment and obstruction. In this case it knows that it is G-dly and is still opposed to it.[307]

The question therefore is: How can a creation oppose its Creator, a veritable part of G-d Himself. This contravenes G-d's very system He instituted within Creation.[308]

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[307] At this point the question seems to be: While the creation can conceal the presence of its Creator, it is not a natural phenomenon; it is rather due to a special G-dly power of *tzimtzum*. However, the Animal Soul is very much aware of the existence of a G-dly soul, yet it chooses to oppose. How could it oppose something that it knows exists? The distinction between the concealment of G-d in creation and the concealment of the G-dly Soul within man comes into sharper focus in the next paragraph. However, in the next few paragraphs the Rebbe modifies the question.

[308] The question here seems to be: While we can accept the notion that G-d has the ability to conceal Himself from us, how do we explain the mechanism for the Animal Soul's obscuring of the G-dly soul? Their respective natures were determined by G-d.

The Rebbe, below, anticipates the argument that G-d could also have performed a "miracle" that would allow

This is analogous to the distinction drawn between the miracle of the splitting of the Red Sea and other

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the G-dly Soul to be concealed by the Animal Soul. If that were the case, however, that it was G-d's miraculous power, our Sages would have acknowledged that incredible miracle. For, as the Rebbe will explain shortly, miracles that involve transformation of one entity into another are comparable to the splitting of the Red Sea where the water turned into dry land. This miracle, and those like it, is characterized as "difficult." Nowhere do we find the obfuscation of the G-dly Soul by the Animal Soul designated as "difficult."

The question is magnified upon appreciating the difference between the way the creation conceals the presence of the Creator and the Animal Soul's opposition to the G-dly Soul. The creation merely obfuscates but does not negate. A table may not reflect its G-dly nature, but it does not tell us to go against G-d. It is, in that sense, neutral. By contrast, the Animal Soul is anything but neutral as it causes us to engage in behavior that contradicts the G-dly Soul's interests. To allow for this phenomenon, there must either be a greater miracle on G-d's part, which would have been expressed by ur Sages and referred to as "difficult," or, alternatively there must be a "natural" explanation for this phenomenon as the Rebbe will explain below that the Animal Soul actually possesses a higher source.

miracles. The Mitteler Rebbe, in *Sha'ar Ho'Emunah*[309] explains, at length, why the splitting of the Red Sea is characterized as "difficult." Indeed, it is regarded as the most difficult of miracles, so much so, that it became the model for anything that is deemed to be difficult. Those things are described "as difficult as the splitting of the Red Sea."[310]

At first glance, the question can be asked, what is so difficult? After all, G-d was the one who created the nature and boundaries of the sea as well as the parameters of dry land.[311]

The explanation, however, is:

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[309] Chapter 29ff and 32ff.

[310] *Pesachim* 118a. Sotah 2a. See there for cross references. See *Zohar* 1:207b. 11:170a.

In the abovementioned references marriage (the ability to find a mate) and earning a livelihood are deemed "difficult" and are compared to the splitting of the Red Sea.

[311] What prevents G-d from altering the nature He Himself created?

G-d molded and established the respective parameters of the sea and dry land. As explained there,[312] the sea represents the most sublime of levels, and is therefore employed as a metaphor for the "hidden worlds," whereas dry land is inferior to the sea, being merely a recipient.[313] As such, the act of splitting the Red Sea, "transforming sea into dry land,"[314] totally reversed the nature G-d instilled in the sea and dry land. From the vantage point of **nature** and the creation it is considered to be "difficult."[315]

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[312] In the abovementioned citation from the Mitteler Rebbe's *Sha'ar Ho'Emunah.*

[313] It is therefore employed as a metaphor for the "revealed worlds" that is on the receiving end from the "hidden worlds."

The Rebbe reinforces the idea that "sea" and "land" are radically different creations, for even on the spiritual plane they represent radically different, even opposite, entities.

[314] *Tehillim* 66:6.

[315] In other words, from the perspective of the Creator nothing is difficult or impossible. However, from the vantage point of the system G-d invested in creation,

Similarly here: The ability outside forces have to oppose the emotions of the G-dly Soul represents a total reversal of the way G-d molded and established the natural patterns of His world.[316] (It is therefore incomparable to the obscuring effects of G-d's attribute of *Gevurah* on the world.)[317]

Although Tanya[318] asserts that the *sitra achara* (which animates all things which are associated with the "three entirely impure *Kelipos*" as explained there in detail[319]) has no genuine existence for which

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which conforms to certain patterns within specific parameters, changing those parameters is deemed "difficult."

[316] The nature of the G-dly Soul is part of the system G-d created. For one part of the system to ignore and oppose another part should be characterized as "difficult" based on the abovementioned definition of "difficult."

[317] Concealment of G-d's presence **is** the nature of the world; the obscuring, and especially opposing, of the G-dly Soul is not.

[318] Chapter 29.

[319] The Alter Rebbe (*Tanya* Chapter 6) describes the two forms of *kelipos* (lit. "shells," so called because they

reason it is likened to darkness that has absolutely no substance. Nevertheless, G-d did indeed endow it with the "license" and ability to rise up and oppose the holiness of the G-dly Soul.

The question therefore remains: If this is true, why is it then not described as difficult, comparable with the difficulty in splitting the Red Sea? We do not find our Sages applying that designation to this matter.

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cover and obscure their content; these *kelipos* conceal the Divine within creation). The first category are the three pure forms of impurity (described in the prophet *Yechezkel's* vision of the Divine chariot (*Yechezkel* 1:4) as a "storm wind," "a great cloud" and "a flaring fire." The second category referred to as *kelipas nogah* (A *kelipah* that shines) is based on the description of *Yechezkel*: "And a light that was around it." The three impure forces are responsible for all the things and actions in the world that either directly negate G-d or His commandments, or the objects that are off limits to the Jew. *kelipas nogah*, by contrast, represents objects and actions that are neutral because they can go either way..

The above[320] is discussed, by the *Tzemach Tzedek*, in his unique style, in his *Sefer HaChakirah*[321] where he poses an apparent contradiction: On the one hand, G-d is beyond the realm of impossibility,[322] nevertheless, we find the description of "impossible" (such as the co-existence of two opposites) ascribed to many matters of holiness.

The *Tzemach Tzedek* reconciles these two seemingly contradictory facts:[323]

When we say that for G-d the impossible is impossible, that is true relative to the Creator. There is no way one can understand, grasp and conceive of the Creator. The term nature cannot be applied to Him. Hence, there can be no impossibilities for Him.

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[320] I.e., the distinction made between G-d's ability to obscure His presence and the creation's ability to transform its nature.

[321] 34b ff.

[322] *Nimna HaNimnaos*-Literally: The impossible [for Him] is impossible. This concept is discussed by the *Rashba* in his Responsa (1:418) cited by the *Tzemach Tzedek*.

[323] I.e. that on one hand, there is nothing impossible, yet we cite certain things as being impossible.

When discussing a created being, one cannot ascribe to it two opposites in its state as a created being; it is an impossibility.

The same would seem to hold true in our discussion. Notwithstanding the Torah's empowerment of the "other side" to oppose the holiness of the G-dly Soul, when it comes to actually engage in opposition it does so as a created, adversarial being. If so, there is a basis for the puzzling question: What power does a created entity have to oppose and wage war against the realm of holiness.[324]

[324] In the recent publication of this discourse (*Lahak*) there is an insertion that appears to be a note the Rebbe added in response to a question that was raised concerning the premise that the term "difficult" must be applied to any situation in which two opposites coexist. This appears to be contradicted by the statement in the Talmud (*Yoma* 21, end of side a, see there for cross references) that the Ark did not occupy any space (despite the fact that it has precise measurements). This is indeed in the realm of impossibility (and yet, the Talmud does not designate it as "difficult").

The Rebbe's answer is that there is no practical difference in making that designation.

[The Rebbe seems to be suggesting that there are phenomena that are indeed in the category of "difficult" but there is no useful purpose in making that statement. There are no lessons to be derived from the knowledge that a given miracle is "difficult."]

"Moreover," the Rebbe continues, "it was a miracle that occurred in the Beis Hamikdash where there were 10 constant miracles (*Avos* 5:5)."

[It was not a novel or extraordinary event relative to the place in which it occurred; it doesn't evoke a sense of incredulity as major miracles would evoke in other less miraculous settings.]

This, the Rebbe continues, "is in stark contrast with the subject of marriage etc. [about which the term difficult is applied. In these cases that affect our behavior and reactions it is important for us to know the incredible miracle that G-d does for us in finding our match and providing for our sustenance—the two miracles that are compared to the splitting of the sea].

The Rebbe then addresses the reason for mentioning that the splitting of the Red Sea is difficult. What practical application is there in this information? In what way is it different from the miracle of the Ark?

The Rebbe explains: "Regarding the splitting of the Red Sea it is mentioned only in passing." [It is not mentioned as an independent statement; it is merely used as a

This question is magnified according to the *Tzemach Tzedek's* exposition[325] of the phrase "difficult as the splitting of the Red Sea." The *Tzemach Tzedek* asks, why is it that the creation of the world, which is creation *ex nihilo*,[326] not described as "difficult." It is a far greater wonder

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point of comparison for the finding of a match.] "Similarly," the Rebbe concludes, "the term "difficult" should have been employed to describe the opposition of the *sitra achara* that we experience on a daily basis. This information would give us encouragement to be victorious over it (as explained in Tanya Chapter 29)".

[There is indeed, a practical reason, for the Sages to have underscored the uniqueness of the miracle of the Animal Soul's ability to oppose the G-dly Soul. Tanya, Chapter 29, which the Rebbe references, describes how one can combat the Animal Soul's desensitization process by reflecting on its lowliness. Knowing that the Animal Soul's power is, in truth, an anomaly that requires a major miracle akin to the splitting of the sea, will aid us in realizing the nullity of the Animal Soul.]

[325] See *Or HaTorah*, *Acharei* (p. 564).

[326] I.e. Creation of something out of total nothingness, which is unlike human creations which always involve taking something and altering its shape or any of its other characteristics.

than the splitting of the Red Sea,[327] as explained in *Sha'ar Hayichud Vo'he'Emunah.*[328]

The *Tzemach Tzedek* answers that the fact that creation is a greater wonder than the splitting of the Red Sea is only insofar as the power of the Creator is concerned. However, to transform the sea into dry land within the parameters of nature and creation entails a measure of difficulty that doesn't even exist in the creation *ex nihilo*.

[Although, *Sha'ar Hayichud Vo'He'Emunah*, cited above, explains that creation itself is exclusively the domain of the Creator, who creates by virtue of His infinite greatness and kindness, nevertheless, once the world was created, and the created beings exist as created beings, there are no contradictions or difficulties inherent in the process of creation].[329]

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[327] Creation exhibits a far greater transcendence over nature than splitting of a sea.

[328] Chapter 2 (77b).

[329] Once we see the world operating according to a fixed system (although the existence of the system itself is beyond our comprehension how it came about *ex nihilo*) creation itself ceases to be a wonder and it does not

This then is why the phrase "difficult as the splitting of the Red Sea" is applied because this difficulty cannot be found even in creation *ex nihilo*.

This is consistent with the *Tzemach Tzedek's* explanation[330] of the verse, "And you shall raise your staff and stretch out your hand…"[331] written in connection with the splitting of the Red Sea. The word "staff" (as explained there and will be explained further below[332]) refers to the entire structure of *hishtalshelus*.[333]

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evoke a sense of amazement that we should designate it as "difficult." However, when we see a transformation of nature occurring within the system, that does indeed evoke a sense of amazement and incredulity. It therefore warrants employing the term "difficult."

[330] *Or HaTorah Beshallach*, 515ff.

[331] *Beshallach* 14:16.

[332] End of Chapter 3.

[333] *Hishtalshelus*-Literally: "sequential (or: hierarchical) order." This is a term used in Chassidic literature to encompass all of the spiritual realms, from the highest transcendent worlds to the physical. They are like links in a chain (*shalsheles* in Hebrew), where one level is

[The reason why the term *matcha* is employed here rather than the synonym "*shevet*"[334] is to preclude the lower worlds of BY"A[335] that are called *shevet*, for reasons explained there. *Matcha* alludes to both the world of *Atzilus* [336] and that which is above

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interlocked within the next in a downward progression to give rise to our physical world.

The meaning then of G-d's instruction to Moses to "raise your staff" is to go beyond the most sublime levels of *hishtalshelus* to bring about the splitting of the sea, as will be explained, in the text, shortly.

[334] These two words are used interchangeably but they are not synonymous. The *shevet* is a pliable branch of a tree, whereas the *mateh* is when it is formed into an unbendable staff.

[335] *BY"A* is an acronym for the lower three spiritual realms in descending order: ***B**eriah* (creation), ***Y**etzirah* (formation), ***A**siyah* (action of completion).These worlds are different plains of G-dly consciousness.

[336] *Atzilus,* "the World of Emanation" is the highest "world" in the sense that it represents the level and consciousness wherein all of G-d's attributes are one with G-d. This is in contrast with the lower three world of *BY"A* which are aware of G-d's overarching presence but nevertheless, the perception in these world is, in varying degrees, that there is a semi-independent

Atzilus. Strength and fortitude are the hallmarks of these worlds, which explains why it is called "your staff."[337]

To transform the sea into dry land, inasmuch as they exist within the parameters of nature, he had to raise his staff even higher than the worlds that are beyond *Atzilus*.

After that he had to "stretch out his hand," the word for hand *yadcha* is related to the letter *yud*. This means that the letter *yud,* which represents the very genesis of the flow from above downward,[338] must

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character to existence, albeit, one that is totally devoted and subordinated to G-d. There are also dimensions that are even more abstract and G-dly than *Atzilus.* These dimensions are expressive of G-d's infinite Being. Yet, even to describe G-d as infinite is a limitation. Moses' needed to raise his staff to reach even beyond the most sublime of worlds to access the Divine power to split the sea.

[337] A staff (*mateh)* in contradistinction to a branch (*shevet*) is solid, unbendable, because it represents the higher, more powerful spiritual worlds.

[338] The letter *yud* is the smallest letter in the Hebrew Alphabet and is the beginning of every letter. Letters are

be activated to effectuate the splitting of the sea and its transformation into dry land.

To summarize: To effect the transformation of the sea into dry land he had to: "raise his staff," i.e. reach out to a level that even transcends the worlds that are above *Atzi*lus.

All of the above serves to magnify the question regarding the Animal Soul's ability to wage a daily war against the G-dly Soul. Not only does the Animal Soul conceal and obstruct the G-dly Soul, it also becomes its adversary. In other words, the

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instruments of revelation. A letter reveals and brings forth an idea. In Hebrew the word letter-*os* actually denotes "bringing forth." The entire process of revealing and expressing G-d's sublime energy is therefore represented by the letter *yud*. It would not have sufficed for Moses to merely "raise his staff" i.e., to reach beyond the most sublime levels to access G-d's most transcendent power; he also had to create the mechanism for that power to be revealed and manifested down here to split the sea. This process is alluded in the words, "and stretch out your hand-*yadcha*, i.e., your *yud*.

"other side" counters with outright opposition.[339] We are compelled to conclude that the power it has to be an adversary is "more potent" than the power of the G-dly Soul, as it were.[340]

III

We can understand this by first prefacing the exposition in the writings of the *Arizal*[341] on the verse, "...[M]an does not live by bread alone, but rather, that man lives from all the utterances of G-

[339] And not just obfuscation.

[340] In the first Ma'amar the Rebbe adds to the question: "When the G-dly Soul is garbed within the Animal Soul in a manner that allows the Animal Soul to conceal the G-dly Soul we have two opposites coexisting in relation to both the G-dly soul and the Animal Soul. From the perspective of the Animal Soul, the question is, how does it become receptive to the G-dly Soul and yet remain an Animal Soul? It is a contradiction in terms! And from the perspective of the G-dly Soul the question is: how does it remain a G-dly Soul while the Animal Soul conceals it? This too is a contradiction in terms. The coexistence of two opposites is only possible for the Creator and does not manifest itself within creation.

[341] *Likkutei Torah* of *Arizal, Ekev* 8:3.

d's mouth."[342] There is a well-known question that has been raised concerning this verse: Isn't G-d's utterance found within man? Why does a human-being then have to receive his sustenance from G-d's utterance within bread?

In this context,[343] the Ba'al Shem Tov, in *Keser Shem Tov*,[344] cites the verse written with respect to the Manna (the subject just read in *Parshas Beshallach*[345]): "He afflicted you and let you go hungry. He fed you with Manna, which you have never experienced, nor have you fathers experienced, to make you realize that man does not live by bread

[342] *Ekev* 8:3.

[343] i.e., the premise that man must depend on the Divine utterance within bread and cannot be sustained just by the Divine utterance of man.

[344] Sec. 194. See Alter Rebbe's *Likkutei Torah, Tzav* 13, end of side b ff. Et al.

[345] *Parshas Beshallach* 16:4ff.—*Beshallach,* which was read on *Yud Shevat* of the year in which this *Ma'amar* was delivered, introduces the subject of Manna. The next quote in the text, however, is from *Ekev*, when Moses recounts the events of the past.

alone, but rather, that man lives from all the utterances of G-d's mouth."[346]

At first glance, the question arises, what is the connection between these matters?[347] Furthermore, how can it be said that "he afflicted you and let you go hungry" in relation to the words "He fed you the Manna."[348]

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[346] *Ekev* 8:3. Here the verse is quoted in its entirety.

[347] What is the connection between the way we were hungry and the knowledge that we do not live by bread alone etc.?

[348] The question is: how is feeding the Manna associated with hunger? [See Talmud (*Yoma* 84b) where it provides 2 simple explanations.]

The answer of the Ba'al Shem Tov is not directly presented in this Ma'amar. However, in the preceding Shabbos Ma'amar the Rebbe cited the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* answer that their hunger was a result of their inability to appreciate the refined spiritual nature of the Manna. And it is this spiritual aspect of the Manna that is the tru animating force of all food that we consume. In the case of the Manna it was clearly felt by all that it was more spiritual than physical, and that its spiritual constitution was the real source of nourishment.

The Ba'al Shem Tov explains by citing the aforementioned citation from *Likkutei Torah* of the Arizal who cites the question posed by philosophers, what is the soul's life-force? It would be illogical to assert that the soul derives its life from the physical bread and food.[349] The philosophers appear confounded by this problem.

The Arizal answers by referring to the way the world was created by G-d's Ten Utterances. These utterances are the "word of G-d" referred to in the verse: "Forever Your word stands in the heavens."[350] This is what sustains the inanimate, vegetative, animal and also the human[351] species. The body that

[349] Why would the human being need to be nurtured by a substance of a lower grade?

[350] *Tehillim* 119:89. See *Sha'ar Hayichud Vo'he'Emunah* Chapter one where the Alter Rebbe explains how the process of creation is a continuous one, wherein the original utterance that was the creative force is continuously being renewed to create every part of creation every instant.

[351] "*Midaber*"-Literally: the speaker. The major distinction of the human being is his ability to communicate through speech.

derives its nourishment from the physical food parallels the soul deriving its sustenance from the word of G-d embedded within the food.

This then is the meaning of the foregoing verse:

"Man does not live by bread alone." The word "alone" implies that man cannot live when the bread is alone; i.e., the physical detached from the inspiration of the spiritual.

"[The[352]] Man lives" refers to the soul that is called *ha'adam*-person with the definite article because it is the essence of the person.

"[M]an lives from all the utterances of G-d's mouth," means that when you utter G-d's name with concentration when reciting the blessing before eating,[353] this utterance of G-d arouses the

[352] In the Hebrew the word used is *ha'adam*, which, when translated literally, yields: "**the** man." The reason it uses the definite article is to allude to the fact that we are dealing with the person's soul, specifically, the unique aspect of the human-being.

[353] There is a play on words here: Literally the verse is referring to that which comes from G-d's mouth; here the emphasis is on what comes out of our mouth. The

"utterance of G-d's mouth" embedded within inanimate, vegetative and animal foods. This Divine utterance, embedded within the food, then joins with the Divine utterance within the soul to nurture the person's soul.

To explain:[354]

There is a principle "the higher something is the lower it will fall."[355] In a subsequent section of the *Ma'amar*,[356] it discusses how the animal, vegetation

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Ba'al Shem Tov links these two renditions: When our G-dly utterances (i.e., our blessing before partaking of the food) are done properly then we activate the Divine utterance within the food to merge with the Divine utterance of our soul. This is what truly animates us.

[354] A question still remains, why the Divine utterance in the food is necessary at all for our sustenance. Couldn't the Divine utterance of the soul nurture itself? And if it needs to be activated, why couldn't recitation of a blessing with concentration suffice?

[355] See *Ma'amarei Admor Hazaken* 5564 p. 126. See the references in *Sefer Hamafteichos L'sifrei Admor Hazaken* (Kehot 5741) entry *Kol hagavoha... Sharei Orah* 58a ff. 65a ff. Et al.

[356] The original *Basi L'Gani* discourse, end of Chapter 14.

and the inanimate are lower than the human being, which, in turn, proves that they possess a spark that originates in a higher place. And when this source is revealed, this Divine utterance gives life to the Divine utterance of the person.

Form the above it follows that whatever is true about the inanimate, vegetative and animal, can be said about those things that are even lower than the inanimate. These lowliest entities comes from an even higher place; higher even than the level that is elicited to give existence to the category of the inanimate.

This is the general difference between "*kelipas nogah*-the translucent shell" and the "*shalosh kelipos hatmei'os-the* three totally impure shells." *Tanya*[357] explains that the three totally impure *kelipos* possess no good; thus they are totally impure. This premise is questioned by the Rebbe Rashab (in his discourse entitled *Vayigdalu HaNe'arim*[358] and in several other

[357] End of Chapter one.

[358] Of the year 5665 (*Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5665, p. 104).

discourses[359]): How could it be said that they possess no good and they are totally impure? If they exist, existence can only come from positive energy.[360]

The Rebbe Rashab explains that existence can manifest itself in a manner of *kelipas nogah* and it can manifest itself in the manner of *shalosh kelipos hatmei'os.*[361] The analogy to these two forms of existence is the mixture of forbidden substances in permissible substances. The same is true of *kelipas nogah;* it is a mixture of good and evil, which can manifest itself either where the majority is good, half good or the minority is good. But even that minimal good is truly good and can exist independently or in a mixture with the negative.

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[359] See *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5670, p. 104. *Hemshech* 5672, Volume 2, p. 770.

[360] Nothing could possibly exist without a Divine spark that animates it. How then can we characterize these *kelipos* as being totally evil when they do, in fact, possess a Divine spark which is certainly good?

[361] See above n. 57 for a brief discussion concerning these two categories of impurity.

By contrast, *shalosh kelipos hatme'os* have no good because the good that enables it to exist is not at all discernible. The parallel to this in the laws of forbidden mixtures is: "*chaticha na'asis neveilah,*[362] where the piece of food become infected by the forbidden substance and acquires the status of the forbidden food itself."[363]

However, the fact that the spark has descended so low proves that its root and source is extremely high; higher even than the source of the Divine utterance in the realm of the inanimate, and even higher than the Divine utterance of the G-dly soul.[364]

IV

[362] *Chullin* 100a. When a piece of forbidden food mixes into kosher food and there is no ratio of 60 to one, the entire mixture acquires the status of forbidden food.

[363] *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5665 ad loc.

[364] Higher than the lowest rung of existence (inanimate), which has the highest source, and higher than the highest rung of existence (the soul) which is manifestly sublime.

From all of the above we can understand how it is possible for the Animal Soul to oppose the G-dly Soul's agenda, even within the parameters of the created being.[365]

Nevertheless, despite the Animal Soul's ability to conceal the power of the Divine Soul, it only empowered to conceal and obstruct the **emotions** of the G-dly Soul. Emotions are expressions of the soul.[366] However, when dealing with the soul's

[365] G-d does not have to super-impose His Supra-rational power to make this opposition happen although it is contrary to the system of nature. The system itself allows for the Animal Soul's ability to counter the G-dly Soul because in its source the Animal Soul is higher.

[366] The soul can be divided into two dimensions: The soul's attributes and its essence. The attributes represent the many layers through which the soul expresses itself and there is the soul's essence that cannot be expressed. The soul's emotions, for example, are the manner through which the soul allows itself to be revealed. If the soul expresses a love for G-d; as powerful and spiritual that love may be, it does not capture its essence. Since the emotions do not really define the essence, an opposing emotion can come and wreak havoc on the G-dly Soul's emotions. The essence, by contrast, is beyond reach of any negative force. It is

essence that is beyond division and defies exposure, the Animal Soul cannot oppose it, nor can it conceal and obstruct its presence.

V.

We will better understand this concept with the Maggid's exposition, in his *Likkutei Amarim*,[367] on the verse "And you shall raise your staff" cited above:

G-d's initial desire to create a world was motivated by the delight he would have in doing so. This delight derives from the efforts of the *tzadikim*. When a person performs his duty to fulfill the will

indivisible, unassailable and inaccessible to threats from the outside. It is the innermost sanctum that is not vulnerable. And when that essence is touched nothing can convince the person to do anything counter to that essence. This is the explanation given in Chassidus, specifically in *Tanya* Chapter 18-19 and in the original *Basi L'Gani* discourse) of the phenomenon of a Jew giving his life for Judaism despite not having any conscious interest in it.

[367] Sec. 134

of the "Primordial One"[368] he causes Divine delight. It is known that everything can be elevated to its root and source. Thus, when a person performs his service to bring joy to his Maker, he elevates those things with which he performs his service to the Primordial will and to the Divine delight, which is a

[368] This term describes G-d as the source of everything, rather than His infinite reach, which is referred to as the *Ein Sof*. Even G-d's light, which is *Ein sof*-infinite is not without a source—G-d's essence. Hence *Kadmon* is the ultimate source and beginning of everything. This beginning is akin to the power of delight in the human being which is the innermost drive that motivates a person to want something. The point of the *Maggid* is that if one performs his service to G-d with the intention of fulfilling G-d's essential will, he is actually taking that which he utilizes to fulfill that will and elevates it to its Source, the Primordial Will and Delight. Once one reaches the source he has the power to alter nature—transform sea into dry land. Inasmuch as everything flows from the source, once one "reaches" the Source they can realign everything that emerges from it. More specifically, as the text will explain, the divisions within nature no longer exist as a result of one reaching the Source relative to which there are no divisions.

realm characterized by a simple unity that transcends division.[369]

Since at that level there is no division, therefore, by way of this elevation to the Primordial will, one has the capacity to alter the sea into dry land.[370] (Alternatively, the example given by the *Maggid*, "One who tells the oil to burn can tell vinegar to burn."[371]

With this premise the *Maggid* explains the verse "And you shall raise your staff" stated in conjunction

[369] "In this context "simple" means a non-divisible, non-composite unity.

[370] Sea and dry land, as underscored above, are two diametrically opposite creations. Yet relative to the Source, all divisions cease.

[371] *Ta'anis* 25a. The Talmud relates the story of R, Chanina ben Dosa whose daughter told him they were out of oil. His response was that the same G-d who gave oil the property to light can endow vinegar with the same property. And, indeed, that is exactly what happened. Rabbi Chanina was one whose whole being was consumed with a desire to satisfy G-d's will. He was therefore able to reach that level—the Source—from which the divisions of oil and vinegar no longer exist.

with the splitting of the Red Sea. The Hebrew word for "staff" can also be rendered "leaning." This refers to a situation in which one can lean in the direction of that which is holy and good or the opposite. Concerning this the Torah says, "And you shall raise your staff:" Raise it[372] to a place above, to the place of will and delight.[373]

The result of this will be: "and stretch out your hand."[374] The word hand-*yadcha* alludes to the letter *yud*; a seminal letter which alludes to the genesis of a process[375] that enables the energy to "lean" and

[372] i.e., the potential for leaning in two different directions symbolized by the staff, which has the connotation of "leaning."

[373] Where there is no leaning in either direction; there is only unity.

[374] The continuation of the verse: "And you shall raise your staff."

[375] That brings the Source to which the staff was raised down into the world that can split the sea and elevate, suppress and transform the Animal Soul.

extend downward ultimately resulting in the splitting of the sea.[376]

This explains why the Animal Soul does not have the ability to conceal the essence of the G-dly Soul. The G-dly soul's essence has the capacity to raise the Animal Soul to its root that leads to the possibility of its suppression and transformation.[377]

VI

Now, just as the above applies to the effect of the G-dly Soul over the Animal Soul, so too it is with respect to its effects on the world. G-d, from His perspective as Creator, is concealed from His creation. Nevertheless, the world is a true existence.[378]

[376] Once the Source is extended downward, its power of unity prevails and the sea and the dry land are no longer disparate entities.

[377] Once one rises to the root where there is no leaning in two directions, the Anima Soul is no longer an adversary.

[378] See also *BasiL'Gani* 5733 Chapter 7.

Now, Maimonides writes:[379]

> "All the beings... came into existence only from the truth of His existence...
>
> This is implied by the prophet's statement, 'And G-d, your G-d is true.'[380] He alone is true and no other entity possesses truth that compares to His truth. This is what the Torah stated: 'There is no true existence besides Him.'"[381]

Despite the fact that the world obscures its true nature, and would therefore seem to be a façade or a mirage, nevertheless, the Rebbe stresses, this does not dictate that the world is a non-existent reality. This premise is one of the paradoxes Chassidic thought expounds on. There are two realities: Reality from G-d's perspective and reality from our perspective. However, even that second reality has validity from G-d's perspective because it is a manifestation of His power of Creation couple with His parallel power of tzimtzum, to conceal His reality from creation.

[379] *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* 1:1, 1:4.

[380] *Yirmiyahu* 10:10.

[381] *Vo'eschanan* 4:35.

Now, despite this,[382] the Torah states: "In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth."[383] The Rebbe Maharash (in several of his discourses,[384] especially the one entitled *Mi Kamocha*[385]) cites this verse as compelling proof that the creation of the world is a true existence, for the Torah of Truth indeed states "In the beginning G-d created."

The Rebbe Maharash also adduces "proof"[386] to support this contention from the law[387] of "two people were gathering cucumbers [with sorcery], one gathers and is not liable and one gathers and is liable: one who performs the act is liable; the one

[382] G-d's exclusive title to truth.

[383] *Bereishis* 1:1.

[384] *Hemshech Mayim Rabim* 5636, Chapter 158. See also *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5626 p. 190. 5628 p. 191ff. 5743 p. 94. 5681 p. 107. *Basi L'Gani* 5733.

[385] *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5629, p. 148.

[386] In the text it uses the term "like a proof" implying that it is not a conclusive proof. Perhaps it can be argued that within the illusion of reality there can be an illusion within an illusion.

[387] *Sanhedrin* 67a.

who creates an illusion is not liable." From here it can be demonstrated that the world's existence is not an illusion but rather genuine reality.[388]

However, this reality derives from "G-d your G-d is true;" and "All the beings... came into existence only from the truth of His existence."[389]

It may be said that our mission in this world is to reveal its true existence; that it is from His true existence that all existence comes into being. It is achieved by the service represented in the words of "raise your staff," as interpreted by the Maggid (cited above), whereby one raises the world to its root and source, reaching the Primordial will and delight. This means that he reaches His true existence.

When one achieves this level changes can occur such as the statement cited above: "The One who says to

[388] If all existence were an illusion, what is the difference between one who "performs the act" and the "one who creates an illusion?"

[389] Notwithstanding the reality of our existence; it is only real and true by virtue of its Divine source, which represents ultimate truth.

oil it should burn can say to vinegar it shall burn," as well as the transformation of the sea into dry land.[390]

Moreover, not only does this cause the suppression of evil, as in the verse, "And his enemies will lick the dust,"[391] but in addition, it also brings about the transformation of the *sitra achara*; the transformation of darkness into light and bitterness into sweetness.

The rationale for this effect is that the process of transformation takes place when one rises up to the Primordial will and delight. From that vantage point there can be transformation; not only

[390] When we reach the source of our existence, we can be in control of the lower reality that is our natural world.

[391] *Tehillim* 72:9. There is a custom to recite a psalm daily, which corresponds to one's age (*Igros Kodesh, Rebbe Rayatz,* Volume 1, p. 31. Volume 10 p. 53). On the 11th of Nissan 5733 (the 71st birthday of the Rebbe), the recitation of this psalm commenced (and continued until the 11th of Nissan of the year 5734). The Chassidim adopted the custom to recite their own psalm as well as the Rebbe's.

transformation of oil and vinegar or sea and dry land but also the transformation of darkness into light and bitterness into sweetness.

This explains why the words "And his enemies will lick the dust," which is the idea of *iskafia*-suppression are followed by the words: "All nations will serve Him,"[392] which embodies the idea of *ishapcha*-transformation. And thus "...the kings of Sheva and Seva will offer gifts."[393]

This will lead to the ultimate result: "His glory will fill the entire earth,"[394] through which this lowly world is rendered "My garden, My dwelling place."

This is also the meaning of the words "The righteous will inherit the land and they will dwell on it eternally."[395] They cause the Eternal to dwell on the earth; [which parallels the abovementioned verse]: "and His glory will fill all the earth," which will extend to all of details and aspects of the earth.

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[392] Ibid. verse 11.

[393] Ibid. verse 10.

[394] Ibid. verse 19.

[395] *Tehillim* 37, 29.

All of the above is achieved by the *tzadikim*—"And Your nation are all *tzadikim*"—endowed with the treasures that are revealed to us by the Supreme King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed is He. These treasures are entrusted to us by the officers to the troops who are the ones who actually bring about victory; the dwelling of G-d within them.

This will lead to "Israel will do Teshuvah and be redeemed forthwith."[396] For, "a man will arise from the House of David who meditates on the Torah and is engaged in Mitzvos as his ancestor David. He will wage G-d's war and be victorious and he will build the Holy Temple in its place," subsequent to which he will gather all the Jews,[397] with the true and complete Redemption; may it be nigh, literally!

[396] See *Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah*, 7:5.

[397] See *Rambam, Hilchos Melachim* 11:4.

בס"ד

BASI L'GANI

MA'AMAR/DISCOURSE OF REBBE

YUD SHEVAT, 5735

Translated and Annotated by

Heschel Greenberg

INTRODUCTION

The Alter Rebbe once said that one must live with the times. Contrary to the way it sounds, the Alter Rebbe was not advocating following modern trends and changing with the times by adjusting our Judaism to the changing values and mores of society. In fact, the opposite is true. The Alter Rebbe was referring to the times measured by the Torah. One must seek guidance for our lives from the weekly Torah portion. So if this week we are reading about the Egyptian bondage and Exodus, we must learn lessons concerning our own spiritual bondage and the proper path to Redemption, etc.

Chassidim have added another layer to the notion of "living with the times." There is an expression that the Rebbe mentioned repeatedly: "the Chassidic *Parsha*." He was referring to the study of the discourses of the Alter Rebbe on the

weekly Torah portions in his seminal works *Torah Or* and *Likkutei Torah*"

In other words, in addition to the lessons gleaned from the actual narratives and laws of the Torah, we must also glean deeper insights from the wellsprings of Chassidus on those Biblical texts, as they correspond to that particular week.

But the Jewish cycle of time is measured yet another way. In addition to the weekly Torah readings, our year is seasoned with Holidays. We must obviously live with the messages of those Holidays, particularly as they are viewed through the lens of *Chassidus*.

One may add that there are certain seasonal discourses that Chassidim "lived with" with extraordinary devotion. One such discourse—or series of discourses—is *Basi L'Gani.*

The Previous Rebbe issued a discourse entitled *Basi L'Gani* to be studied on the tenth day of Shevat in the year 5710-1950, which was the

yahrtzeit of his grandmother, the *Rebbetzin Rivkah*. That day, the Previous Rebbe left us physically as well, and, as a result, this discourse became the final Divine message that was channeled through the Rebbe, the leader of that generation, to his followers, and indeed to the entire Jewish nation for posterity.

The Rebbe asked of us to study this discourse in the days that lead to Yud Shevat. and review it, publically, throughout the day of Yud Shevat.

From the year 5711—the first *Hilula* of the Previous Rebbe—onward the Rebbe delivered a *Ma'amar*/Chassidic Discourse with the same title of *Basi L'Gani*. Indeed, the recitation of that discourse in the year 5711 was the "sign" that the Rebbe had finally accepted the role of Rebbe after many months of resisting that position of leadership.

Each year, the discourse the Rebbe delivered on Yud Shevat focused and elaborated on one chapter of the Previous Rebbe's Discourse. The original *Ma'amar* (which is actually a series of

four discourses) comprises twenty chapters and for twenty years the Rebbe delivered a *Ma'amar* on the chapter that corresponded to that year. In the year 5730, the Rebbe concluded a series of annual *Basi L'Gani* discourses, elaborating on the final twentieth chapter. There was some suspense as to what the Rebbe would do the next year.

In the year 5731, the Rebbe started a new series of discourses beginning again with a *Ma'amar* on the first chapter of the original *Ma'amar*. It was a completely new discourse, not a repetition of the one he said in 5711. This custom continued until—and through—the year 5748, when the Rebbe delivered a discourse on the 18th chapter. For reasons that were not divulged, the Rebbe did not continue this custom for the years beyond 5748. However, he did edit and submit for publication some of the earlier discourses, including the one of 5732. This was one of the last discourses the Rebbe edited for publication for Yud Shevat 5752.

In short, Chassidim were asked to live with—and they did live—with *Basi L'Gani* in general and the corresponding chapter in particular. This year 5775 (the fourth cycle) we live with the discourses that the Rebbe said in the years 5715 and 5735.

Most of the references cited in the footnotes were supplied by the publishers of these discourses ("*Va'ad L'Hafotzas Sichos*") and, more recently, "*Lahak*" (which published a somewhat edited version of the *Ma'amar*) and were reproduced here in the translation. Additional explanatory footnotes were added by the translator to help clarify some of the concepts in the *Ma'amar*. These comments are my humble attempt at making some of the arcane concepts somewhat more accessible to the average reader. I cannot vouch for their accuracy.

I am publishing this translation on the occasion of my birthday ישראל העשיל בן בילא מלכה (on *Yud-Gimmel Shevat*), the birthday of my daughter Chaya Sarah חי' שרה בת לאה תחי' (on

Yud Aleph Shevat) and my son Levi Yitzchak לוי יצחק בן לאה שיחי' (on *Chof-Beis Shevat*), the birthday of my son Nochum נחום בן לאה שיחי' (on *Beis Shevat*), my daughter-in-law Bracha Leah ברכה לאה תחי' בת אסתר מרים מלכה ע"ה (on *Chof Vov Shevat*) and my granddaughter Miriam מרים בת רבקה שיינא תחי', (on *Hei Shevat*,) especially in honor of her Bas Mitzvah.

It is my fervent prayer that the study of this *Ma'amar* will bring blessing to all of the above for a year of success, materially and spiritually, long life, good health, Chassideshe Nachas from children etc., and, most importantly, it should hasten the time when we will be reunited with the *Ba'al Hilulo* and our Rebbe, with the true and complete Redemption by our righteous Moshiach! מלכנו משיחנו, תיכף ומי"ד ממ"ש. אכי"ר

Heschel Greenberg

5 Shevat, 5775

Buffalo, New York

BS"D

YUD SHEVAT, 5735

Basi L'Gani[398] - "I have come into My garden, My sister, My bride" [399]

The *Ba'al Hahilula*[400] in his series of discourses[401] associated with his Hilula cites the words of *Midrash Rabbah* on this verse:[402]

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[398] This discourse is based, primarily, on the fifth chapter of the Discourse *Basi L'Gani* 5710. This chapter corresponds to this year – See Introduction.

[399] *Shir HaShirim* 5:1. The entire *Shir Hashirim* is a metaphor which describes the mutual love between G-d and the Jewish people.

[400] Literally the "Master of the Wedding." The day a *tzadik* passes is called a wedding because it is the day his soul is reunited with its Maker.

[401] As stated in the Introduction, the Previous Rebbe issued a discourse on the occasion of *Yud Shevat* 5710, the day of his *histalkus.* He also submitted three additional discourses, which were continuations of the first one. They comprise a total of 20 chapters.

"The words 'My garden' means 'My chamber;' to the place where My dwelling was originally, for the essence of the *Shechinah* (Divine presence)[403] was originally revealed below.

Prior to the sin the essence of the Shechinah was situated down below, particularly in Gan Eden. Through the sin of the Tree of Knowledge and sins committed by subsequent six generations the Shechinah departed and ascended upward until it reached the seventh heaven.

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[402] This Midrashic comment can be found in several locations. The Previous Rebbe, however, emphasizes that he is referring to the Midrashic comment in the Midrash on **this** very verse. Chassidim speculated that this was a hint as to who should succeed him as the leader of the seventh generation. The name attached to this Midrashic teaching, in this specific location, is "R. Menachem, his son-in-law"! One may add another hint. The word *bimkomo*-in his place is the same gematria as the Rebbe's second name *Mendel!*

[403] For an extensive treatment of the meaning of the "essence" of the Shechinah, see the Rebbe's first discourse upon accepting the leadership of Chabad, s.v. Basi L'Gani 5711.

Later, seven righteous people arrived and brought the Shechinah down from the seventh heaven to the sixth and so on until Moses, who was the seventh generation and "all sevens are beloved"[404] and brought the Shechinah down to this world.

Moses' success at bringing the Shechinah down was primarily evident in the Mishkan, as it says, "Make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in them."[405] In general terms, the objective is to make a dwelling place for G-d in our world, which is the lowest of realms.[406] More specifically, we are told to make a dwelling for

[404] *Vayikra Rabbah* 29:11.

[405] *Terumah* 25:8.

[406] See *Tanchuma, Bechukosai* 3. *Naso* 16. *Bereishis Rabbah* end of chapter 3. *Bamidbar Rabbah* 13:6. *Tanya*, beginning o chapter 36. The notion that G-d's rationale for creation is tomake this world a dwelling for Him is one of the most fundamental teachings of Chassidus, particularly in the Rebbe's thought. See *Bringing Heaven Down to Earth*, by Rabbi Feitel Levin for an extensive treatment of this subject.

G-d **within** the dwelling, referring to the Mishkan—"And I will dwell in them."

Now, the boards of the Mishkan, which surrounded the Mishkan on all sides, were made of *Shittim* (Acacia) wood.[407] This suggests that "*Shittim* wood" convey an essential message pertaining to the Mishkan.[408] More specifically, the fact that the Torah stresses that the wood was *Shittim* wood[409] demonstrates that *Shittim* too is a central theme of the Mishkan.

In the original Discourse[410] he explains that the word *Shittim* is cognate to the word *shtus*-folly, which represents the spirit of folly that enters a

[407] *Terumah* 26:15.

[408] The fact that it surrounded the entire Mishkan and was not just some small part of its construction dictates that the Mishkan's spiritual role is somehow linked to the Shittim wood.

[409] The fact that it goes out of its way to identify the word as Shittim (and does not just say that it had to be made of wood) suggests that there I a particular emphasis on this type of wood.

[410] Of the Previous Rebbe, Chapter 5

person when he commits a sin, concerning which our Sages state, "no one commits a sin unless a spirit of folly enters him."[411]

Because foolishness is the root of sin, one can correct and transform it by employing its positive counterpart, "Holy folly," measure for measure.[412] This method enables one to nullify and gain victory over the spirit of folly.

Thus, because the construction of the Mishkan and the presence of the Divine in it came to correct the sins of the seven generations etc., which derive from the spirit of foolishness, it thus follows that the way to correct that was through the method of "measure for measure" – "holy folly."

[411] *Sotah* 3a. The Talmud employs that expression with respect to punishment. The Rebbe applies it here to the rectification of the sin. If the sin was caused by foolishness, the correction must also come through foolisheness.

[412] *Sanhedrin* 90a. See *Sotah* 8b*ff.*

This was the function of the *Shittim* wood in the Mishkan; to correct and transform the unholy foolishness.

The above represents the central theme of the first four chapters of the first Discourse in the series.

II

In the fifth chapter (which corresponds to this year[413]) the Previous Rebbe continues to define the concept of holy folly. Within the realm of holiness, it represents "deviating above and beyond knowledge.[414] Folly is defined by the deviation above and beyond knowledge and wisdom.[415] It transcends limits and boundaries.[416]

[413] The year 5735, the year this Discourse was delivered.

[414] Chapter 3.

[415] Ibid.

[416] In the original version of this Discourse the Rebbe added what seems to be a parenthetical statement and was lft out of the *Lahak* version: "Folly is either deviating above or below the logic and rationality. Except that going below is folly of the "other side," whereas going

To explain this concept as it relates to human behavior he cites the verse in Tehillim (Psalm 73):[417] "I was a fool, without knowledge, I was an animal towards You. [Yet,] I was always with you…" The meaning of this verse is explained there: **Because** I was a fool and an animal, which means that I possessed holy folly which transcends reason and knowledge, I am **therefore**

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above logic is holy folly. **This means that even matters of holiness that are below reason and logic are caused by and rooted in the soul's essence where it transcends reason and logic; where it is in a state of visualization**." The Rebbe seems to be suggesting that even when we serve G-d with simple "*kabbolas ol*-acceptance of the yoke" it contains within it the power of the soul's essence that transcends logic. See Rabbi Shmuel Avtzon's excellent treatment of this matter in the recently published journal *Kimayim Layum Mechasim.*

[417] Verse 22, It is noteworthy that, beginning with the 11th day of Nissan of the year 5734, this verse is recited in conjunction with the custom to recite the psalm which corresponds to one's age (*Igros Kodesh* of the Rebbe Rayatz volume 1, p. 31. Volume 10 p. 53). The Rebbe was then 72 years old and this was the Psalm that Chassidim would recite every day during that year.

always with you.[418] In order to reach G-d's very essence one must surrender one's will in a manner that transcends reason and knowledge. This concept is therefore characterized as folly.

The ultimate goal for a person is to be "with You," close to G-d's *Or Ein Sof*-Infinite Light.[419] As explained earlier,[420] "the secret of sacrifices is

[418] *Tanya,* Chapter 18 (24a). The simple meaning of the verse is: **despite** my being a fool and an animal I am still with You. Here the verse is reinterpreted in the opposite manner: the reason why I am with You is **because** I am a fool.

[419] The word "You" in this verse is understood to mean Your very Essence, in contrast with lower manifestations of G-dly light that are mere reflections and contain a mere glimmer of G-d's infinite and essential Being.

[420] In the original discourse, chapter 2. See also the discourse s.v. *to'amah* 5709 (*Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5709 p. 27) and the notes ad loc.

that it rises to and draws us near[421] to the secret of the Infinite One (*Ein Sof*)."[422]

The question arises, if the *Ein Sof* is beyond all parameters and boundaries, how is it possible "to be with You?"[423]

To answer this question the verse in Psalms prefaces the words ""I was a fool, without knowledge..." One can constantly be with You by being a "fool without knowledge," that which precludes reason and knowledge, that which transcends reason and knowledge—"holy folly."[424]

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[421] The word *korban* does not mean sacrifice but "getting close" or "drawing near."

[422] See *Zohar* II, 239a. III, 26b. Cited later in the series, Chapter 18.
The *korban* is not offered to any manifestation of G-d but to G-d's infinite light.

[423] See n. 21.

[424] Obviously, the Rebbe's emphasis on precluding and going beyond knowledge does not mean to negate using our mind in the service of G-d. An integral part of Judaism involves study of Torah, which is an intellectual

Now the idea of "I was a fool, without knowledge..." which allows us to realize closeness to G-d expressed in the words, "I was always with You," involves all aspects of our behavior (as mentioned above).

However, [while it applies to all areas of service to G-d], it stands to reason that this approach must primarily be reflected in the area of service which brings all other aspects of our service to a

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exercise. Likewise, when performing a Mitzvah, the ideal is to have an understanding of the reasons and deeper meanings of the Mitzvah. The point made here, and later in this Ma'amar as well as in many other Chassidic sources, is that we cannot be content with the intellectual approach to Judaism; we must transcend even the most profound and desirable levels of knowledge. Furthermore, we must see to it that our transcendent folly inspires, affects and elevates the intellectual dimension. Thus, the idea of "folly" in the service of G-d is not constrictive and limiting. On the contrary it broadly expands our spiritual horizons. However, see below where the Rebbe takes the point about holy folly to another level. The objective is that the holy folly should permeate even one's intellectual involvement with Torah.

state of perfection. This is the service of prayer, which is represented by the "ladder situated on the ground and reaching into the heavens."[425] Prayer elevates all of our thoughts, spoken words and actions to the heavens.[426] The service of prayer is thus about achieving "I was always with You," which is essentially the directive of the Code of Jewish Law[427] "I place G-d before me always."[428]

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[425] This ladder that appeared in Jacob's dream (*Vayeitzei* 28:12) is interpreted by the *Zohar* (1:266b. 111:306b. *Tikkunei Zohar* 45 (83a)) as a metaphor for prayer that links the earth with heaven.

[426] Not only does prayer connect us to the heavens during our prayer, it also has elevates all of our thought, speech and action of that day. As such, prayer is much more than just another aspect of Jewish practice it brings fulfillment to all aspects o Jewish life.

[427] *Rama, Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim*, beginning.

[428] *Tehillim* 16:8.

Prayer is so central to our service of G-d, inasmuch as it affects all of our endeavors, and holy folly is connected to prayer as will be shown below, it follows that holy folly is central to our service in general and, more

This premise is supported by the juxtaposition of the foregoing verse[429] with a later verse: "Whom else do I have in heaven? And beside You I want no one on earth."[430] The Tzemach Tzedek recounted[431] that when the Alter Rebbe was in a state of meditative ecstasy he would be heard saying this verse and the Alter Rebbe would add,[432] "I want nothing at all! I don't want Your Gan Eden, I don't want Your World to Come... I want nothing other than You alone!"

The fact that the Tzemach Tzedek describes this event occurring during the Alter Rebbe's state of meditative ecstasy (expressing passionate love)

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specifically, it is also most essential to prayer. Thus, prayer that lacks transcending our limited reason and logic is inherently an incomplete prayer

[429] Which refers to our foolishness, i.e., serving G-d with "holy folly."

[430] Verse 25.

[431] *Shoresh Mitzvas Hatefilah (Sefer Hamitzvos* of Tzemach Tzedek 138, end of side a) chapter 40. This is cited in *Hayom Yom*, entry 18 Kislev.

[432] In Yiddish.

and in the context of his exposition of the various levels of love for G-d, it follows that the concept contained in the words "beside You I want no one" is the ultimate state of love, which is an integral component of prayer[433] (as expressed in the words "there is no service like the service of love"[434]).

III

The Discourse continues:

> "Our Sages stated (*Kesubos*):[435] It was said of R.[436] Yehudah the son of R. Ila'i that at

[433] Prayer is more than just reciting words and making requests of G-d. It is an authentic and exalted meditative experience and an outpouring of love for G-d. The highest level of prayer and love is the one expressed by the Alter Rebbe in the anecdote cited here. And is based on the words of the Psalm.

[434] See *Zohar* II:55b. III:267a. *Likkutei Torah*, *Shlach* 42c., et al. The term "service" relates to prayer which is called "service of the heart." Thus, the concepts of love and prayer are interchangeable.

[435] *Kesubos* 17a.

weddings he would twirl a sprig of myrtle as he danced before the bride.... Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitzchak would dance with three ("He would juggle with three twigs of myrtle."-- Rashi).[437]

When Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitzchak passed away, "a pillar of fire appeared, separating him from all those who were near him."

R. Zeira thereupon stated: "The venerable sage has been well served by his folly

[436] In this translation "R." is short for Rebi, the honorific title given to the rabbis of the Tana'itic period and to the rabbis who lived in Israel in the early Amoraic period. Other rabbis are called Rav. This depended on whether they received the original Semicha (ordination) in an unbroken chain back to Moses.

[437] The Talmud continues: Said R. Zeira: "This venerable sage is embarrassing us" ('by making light of the respect due to Torah scholars through his undignified behavior' -- Rashi).

The reason the Discourse cites this Talmudic passage is to reinforce the idea[438] that folly can be used to describe the proper approach to serving G-d, [which parallels the idea of folly the Talmud uses to describe commission of a sin. And it is for this reason that the Mishkan was made of Shittim wood because it is cognate to *shtus*-folly].[439] Towards this end he cites this Talmudic narrative (which will enable us to

[438] The foregoing verse "I was a fool, without knowledge, I was an animal towards You," which exemplifies the idea of holy folly, has no explicit mention of the word *shtus*-folly. The term for "fool" in this verse is *ba'ar* not *shoteh*.

[439] The Mishkan's construction of *shittim* wood is not incidental to the Mishkan. It captures the entire focus of the Mishkan to create a Sanctuary for G-d in our physical world. This, we accomplish, only through holy folly, not through conventional methods of holiness. The reason for this is that in order to reverse the negative form of folly that caused sin and the departure of G-d from our world we must meet it measure for measure as explained above. Moreover, as is explained in the text, in order for us to get close to an Infinite G-d one must unleash unconventional soul powers; holy folly.

understand the specifics of holy folly, as will be explained later) concerning his dancing with a myrtle sprig and with juggling with three myrtle sprigs, contrary to the standard rational approach of Torah scholars. This trans-rational approach ultimately led to "a pillar of fire that separated between him and all those who were near him" upon his passing.

We must understand. If this was the intent of the Discourse, it would have sufficed to cite the idea that his folly assisted the Sage. Why does the Discourse cite all of the details of that narrative that do not appear to have any bearing on the subject of folly? Why does he cite the introductory incident with R. Yehudah the son of R. Ila'i who would dance with a sprig of myrtle and that Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitzchak would dance with three sprigs of myrtle?[440]

[440] In a note penned by the Rebbe, the Rebbe writes: "One cannot answer that the reason he cites that R. Yehudah bar Ila'i's dancing with one sprig is to serve as a source for Rashi's commentary that the words "he danced with three" refers to three sprigs of myrtle – this

Moreover, he cites all the three versions of R. Zeira's reaction:

> "R. Zeira said: "The venerable sage has been well served by his sprig" (*Shot-ie-ah*), ('the sprig of myrtle with which he used to dance' *Rashi*).
>
> Another version: "The venerable sage has been well served by his folly" (*Shtusay*), ('for he clowned like a fool' -- Rashi).
>
> A third version: "The venerable sage has been well served by his policy" (*Shitosay*), ('by his customary course of conduct' (*Rashi*).[441]

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is untenable because that would not be consistent with the objective of the Discourse to clarify Rashi's source. Also, what is the relevance in knowing with what he danced?

[441] In a note penned by the Rebbe, the Rebbe writes: "Furthermore, the versions are contradictory: a sprig is **outside** the person, whereas a **policy** and folly are intrinsic to the person.

The Rebbe's question here seems to be: How can we compare the idea of a policy of folly to a mere physical

It would seem that the only relevant version is the one about his *shtus*-folly. Why are all the other versions necessary?

The question is magnified considering the fact that this Talmudic passage is cited in the discourse of the Mitteler Rebbe (in his Siddur)[442] and in a discourse of the Rebbe Rashab on the verse Basi L'Gani 5758[443] (where some of the points of the Hilula series are discussed in general terms) as well as in his *Kuntres U'Ma'ayon*.[444] However, only details directly related to the exposition are referred to in these sources. In our Discourse, by contrast, all the foregoing details that do not seem to add clarification to the subject at hand, are cited.

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act of dancing with a branch? This version only weakens the powerful effects of the other versions, particularly, the one that ascribes this behavior to a policy. Why then does the Discourse cite extraneous information that detracts form the strength of the message?

[442] *Siddur im Dach* – 128a*ff*

[443] *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5658 p. 210.

[444] Discourse 26:1.

One may suggest the following explanation for this:

This Discourse is dedicated to explaining all the specifics of "the spirit of folly" that enters the sinner [and causes him to sin]. It[445] also seeks to differentiate between the letters *kuf* and *reish* of the word *sheker*-falsehood[446] and the letters

[445] As explained in the introduction, the Previous Rebbe's Ma'amar is actually a series of four discourses. The reference in the text here is to chapter 6 which appears in the second discourse of the series.

[446] In chapter sis of the Discourse it highlights another aspect of the Mishkan's boards. The word for board is *keresh* which contains the same letters as the word *sheker*-falsehood and *kesher*-bond. The purpose of the Mishkan is to transform the falsehood of the world into a bond with G-d. The Discourse then goes into the minute details of the word *sheker*; how two of its letters *kuf* and *reish* represent negative forces and are paralleled by the similar letters that reflect the powers of holiness. All of these explanations point to the Discourses intent of demonstrating the need to identify the specific negative characteristics of evil so that we can unleash its parallel positive forces. Focusing on the general situation does not suffice. The Rebbe will use prayer as an example, that notwithstanding the lofty

daled and *hei* etc.[447] He therefore wants to explain the specifics of "holy folly" which neutralize their parallel forces of unholy folly, as will be explained below.

IV

The core point that clarifies the above is as follows:

The *Shittim* wood, which was used for the construction of the Mishkan, represents an encompassing force. They formed the walls that surrounded and encompassed all aspects of the Mishkan. Within the confines of the walls all of the various services were conducted, the most general of which was the sacrificial service, including the *Tamid*-daily and *Musaf*-additional offerings. This service had to conform with

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aspects of prayer, attention must be paid the requests for our specific and detailed needs. It is not enough to just stand before G-d.

[447] See the original Discourse (Chapter 6*ff*) and the corresponding discourses of the Rebbe, for analysis of these letters.

reason and logic and had to adhere to the most minute particular requirements.

All of these specific details, though, were surrounded and encompassed by the Shittim wood, which symbolizes folly, which, in the realm of holiness represents holy folly that goes beyond reason and logic. This encompassing force influenced all of the particulars of the service which transpired within the Mishkan.

This model is an analogy for prayer (which, as stated above, chapter 2, expresses the idea of holy folly referred to by the words "I was a fool without knowledge... which leads to, "I am always with You.") There is its general and central idea which encompasses and influences all of the specifics inherent in prayer.[448]

[448] In a note penned by the Rebbe, the Rebbe added: "See *Kuntres HoAvodah* (Chapter 5): even the encompassing force of *Chaya* has the power to affect... certainly the encompassing power of *Yechidah."*

Chaya and *Yechidah* are two encompassing faculties of our soul; however *Yechidah* is associated with its essence. Perhaps, the Rebbe suggesting that the level of

To explain:

It was explained above that the essential concept of prayer is captured by the words heard by the Alter Rebbe when he was in his intense meditative state of ecstasy, He echoed the words of David "the sweet singer of Israel"[449] whose words were said in the name of all of Israel: "What is for me in the heavens and that which is with You I do not desire on earth." Prior to this he declares: "And I am always with You." It was also explained that the means to attain this state is stated in the earlier verse, "I am a fool and do not know…"

Notwithstanding the above, prayer, by definition, is about requesting one's needs, which involve even the most minute details.

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attachment to G-d, when the Alter Rebbe exclaimed "I only want You…" is of the higher encompassing force of *Yechidah* and will therefore certainly affect the rest of the day.

[449] II *Shmuel 23:1.*

There is a well-known dispute amongst the legal authorities as to whether prayer is a Biblical obligation.[450] [451] This is discussed at length by the commentaries to the beginning of Rambam's Laws of Prayer, where he states: "It is a positive commandment to pray daily."[452] However, this is the subject of a dispute between the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds. In the Babylonian Talmud[453] it is states that R. Shimon bar Yochai and his colleagues, whose sole preoccupation was Torah study, were required to interrupt their studies with the recitation of the Shema, They did not have to interrupt their studies for prayer. The reason given is that the recitation of the

[450] Or merely a rabbinical enactment.

[451] See also *Likkutei Sichos*, volume 22, p. 116-117. *Toras Menachem, Bechuksai* 5744.

[452] See, however, *Ramban*'s criticisms on *Rambam's Sefer Hamitzvos (Mitzvas Aseh* 5) and commentaries ad loc. *Semak, Mitzvah* 12. *Rashbatz* in his *Sfer Zohar Harakia,* 12.

[453] *Shabbos* 11a and Rashi's commentary.

Shema is a Biblical obligation whereas prayer is only a rabbinic obligation.

The Jerusalem Talmud,[454] however, cites two opinions about this matter. R. Acha maintains that recitation of the Shema is Biblical, but prayer is not Biblical. R. Ba offers an alternative distinction: Recitation of the Shema has a fixed time, whereas prayer has no fixed time. From this one can prove that according to this latter view prayer is indeed Biblical. One may suggest that this opinion is the source for Rambam's ruling that prayer is a Biblical obligation. Although, there is a general rule that when the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds disagree we follow the Babylonian,[455] there is evidence from several citations of the Babylonian Talmud that

[454] *Berachos* 1:2. *Shabbos* 1:2.

[455] *Rif* end of *Eiruvin.* See Encyclopedia Talmudis (Volume 9), entry *halacha,* p. 250*ff.* See there for cross references.

prayer is Biblical, [456] only the text of and times for prayer are rabbinic.[457]

Indeed, *Raya Mehemna* (which is the Book of Commandments within the *Zohar) in Parshas Pinchas*[458] states: "The eleventh commandment is called the morning, afternoon and evening prayer." This suggests that, according to the *Zohar*, not only is prayer itself Biblical in origin but even the times for prayer are Biblical.

This explains why, in the Jerusalem Talmud Tractate *Berachos*[459] it relates that Achitophel would pray three times a day.[460]

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[456] See *Piskei DInim of Tzemach Tzedek, Chidushim on Rambam, p. 340c ff.*

[457] See *Megilas Esther* on *Sefer Hamitzvos* loc. cit. See also Alter Rebbe's *Igros Kodesh, p. 33ff. Sefer Hamitzvos* of Tzemach Tzedek 115a. Letter of 11th of Nissan 5716 *Igros Kodesh,* volume 12, p. 412.

[458] *Zohar* III 257a.

[459] Chapter 4:4.

[460] Although he lived before the composition of the prayers by the Men of the Great Assembly who lived

At any rate, even the view that the times for prayer and the text of prayer is not Biblical, prayer itself is Biblically mandated. And the fundamental aspect of prayer, to cite Rambam, is for a person to ask for his needs in a manner of request and supplication.

Tzemach Tzedek (in the beginning his *Shoresh Mitzvas Hatefilah*, after citing the dispute of the authorities as to whether prayer is Biblical or rabbinical, and that most of those who enumerate the commandments concluded that the Biblical obligation of prayer is to ask for one's needs) adds that this represents the very root of faith. When one asks for his needs of G-d it leads a person to the awareness and understanding that G-d is the exclusive Master of His world and watches over every single one of

close to 500 years after Achitophel's time. This proves that the idea of praying three times daily predated the rabbinic enactment of prayer and is presumably rooted in the Torah, in consonance with the opinion of the Zohar.

His creatures and that He is the only One who can help.

King Solomon's prayer[461] concerning the Holy Temple also supports this premise. He prayed: "Any prayer or supplication, which will be made by any man (who has had undesirable experiences, as enumerated there in the preceding verses)..., and he will spread forth his hands toward this house. You shall hear... and do according to all that the stranger call You for." This is certainly true with regard to a Jewish person (only that the stranger gets whatever he requests, to sanctify G-d's name, otherwise he will complain etc.[462] For a Jew it merely states: "And give to every man according to his ways"

From the above it is clear that the Holy Temple was the place in which one would make requests for his needs; indeed, one's very specific needs. At the same time, paradoxically, prayer involves the attainment of "That which is with You I do

[461] I Melachim 8:38-43.

[462] Rashi ad loc.

not desire." When a person is in this state he does not have any material needs and not even spiritual needs, even on the highest plane. All he wants is nothing more than You Yourself.

To clarify this paradox:

Prayer in general is like the ladder which is situated on the ground and reaches up to the heavens. This means that prayer elevates a person to the heavens, even unto the level of "and that which is with You I don't desire…." However, this state of closeness does not negate his personal requests. On the contrary, quantitatively speaking, most of our prayers are devoted to personal requests.

Moreover, the effects of one's meditative ecstasy (implied in the choice of the word concerning the Alter Rebbe that what they heard him say was at the time of his **meditative ecstasy**) extend beyond the time of prayer and is felt in every aspect of his service and behavior throughout the day.

Although our Sages said, "If only a person prayed all day,"[463] the key words are "if only…", suggesting that one must devote each and every day to its intended service,[464] albeit permeated with the influence that is provided for by the sum-total of one's prayer—the sentiment of "what is with You I do not desire."

V

The above reflects the teaching of the Ba'al Shem Tov (in *Tzava'as Harivash*[465] and other sources) concerning G-d's great kindness that keeps one alive after prayer. The laws of nature dictate that one should die… for having invested so much in

[463] *Berachos* 21a, *Yerushalmi Berachos* 1:2. This seems to imply that the ideal is to be in a meditative state all day, contradicting the premise that the majority of the day must contain other activities that are influenced by prayer. The Rebbe's answer is that it is only a theoretical ideal and that in practice it is realized when all of the day's activities are inspired by the exalted state of one's prayer in the morning.

[464] See *Zohar* III 94b.

[465] Sec. 35. 42.

his prayer due to his intense concentration. Although he was referring to the established liturgy containing 18 specific blessings, nevertheless each of these individual requests must be permeated with a passion to the point of the soul's expiration.[466] Only G-d's great kindness prevented him from actually expiring.

A similar thought has been advanced by the Maggid (of Mezritch) in his exposition[467] of the Talmudic statement[468] that "one who makes his Tefillin round has incurred danger and does not have a Mitzvah."

In this exposition, the words "his *Tefilah*"[469] means his attachment to G-d (explaining the word *Tefilah* as prayer, where the objective is to cling to G-d).

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[466] If not for G-d's kindness that keeps him alive.

[467] *Or Torah* 407. 479.

[468] *Megillah* 24b.

[469] Singular of Tefillin but interpreted by the Maggid to mean prayer which has the same root meaning of Tefillin, i.e. a bond.

The word "round" is understood here to mean cyclical, referring to a person whose attachment to G-d is sporadic; sometimes he is connected and sometimes he is not. And as something that is round, at times the person is above and at times the person is below. His attachment is not constant and therefore "he does not have a **Mitzvah**," which derives from the word *tzavsa*- bonding. This means that when a person's prayer is subject to vacillation it indicates that he is not in a state of bonding and attachment. Had he been so attached he would not have been subject to these fluctuations.

Moreover, there can be danger in this experience. As Rashi[470] explains the round Tefillin can penetrate his skull. When a person falls upon

[470] Ad loc.

reciting *Tachnun*[471] there is a danger that he might crush his skull.[472]

The meaning of the above[473] in spiritual terms is that the falling on our face represents the descent into sub-holy turf to engage in the process of refinement... (as explained at length in the writings of the Arizal[474]). Therefore, if his prayer was such that there is, G-d forbid, no bonding and attachment above, there can be danger to him when he is engaged in the refinement process below.

From this too we can understand the paradox of prayer. On the one hand, prayer represents one's attachment (which parallels the idea of the

[471] The prayer recited after *Shemoneh Esrei* in which we "fall down" (pray in a sitting position and) supplicating G-d to forgive us for our sins.

[472] Commentary of Rabenu Chananel ad loc.

[473] In spiritual terms.

[474] See *Pri Eitz Chaim, Sha'ar Halulv,* Chpater 3.

"expiration" of the soul[475]). In this state one is not "round," but is beyond fluctuation, just as G-d to whom one is attached ("With You I do not desire"[476]).

However, simultaneously, this state of being beyond change extends to and affects the necessary changes one is compelled to go through in the course of one's service throughout the day. The root of this transition [from being beyond change to change] is in prayer itself; in the recitation of *Tachnun*, which represents the service of refining the world,

[475] I.e., the climactic aspect of prayer is to become so attached to G-d, to the exclusion of all else physical and spiritual, that the soul is ready to leave the physical body if it were not for G-d's kindness as was stated above in the name of the Ba'al Shem Tov.

[476] The state of attachment to G-d to the point where one desires absolutely nothing but G-d's essence is the highest state of attachment to G-d. Just like G-d, obviously, does not change or experience fluctuations, so too, a person who is one with G-d does not experience change.

extending to the lowest realms that are beneath the realm of holiness.

VI

As explained above the paradox of prayer is that while, on one hand, it contains many blessings and requests for personal needs, they are influenced by the state of "With You I desire nothing." The same is true about our service to G-d in general. To support this premise[477] he cites in the Discourse the Talmudic story in Tractate Kesubos concerning the dancing with the sprig of myrtle.

To explain:

In his *Siddur,*[478] The Mitteler Rebbe explains the dancing with three sprigs. Three sprigs represent three approaches, referring to the three pillars

[477] That this paradoxical state is not restricted to prayer.

[478] *Siddur im Dach* 128a *ff.*

upon which the world stands,[479] which encompasses all of our service to G-d.[480]

The Tzemach Tzedek[481] and the Rebbe Maharash[482] (basing their words on the writings of the *Arizal*[483]) expound on the unity expressed by the Four Species. In the case of the *hadas*-myrtle, it has to have three leaves coming from one stem.[484] One can therefore conclude that when one has three myrtles (as required in the *Lulav* and its attached species, where one must have three myrtles[485]) and each myrtle consists of three leaves emerging from one stem, this

[479] Avos 1:2.

[480] Here we see the paradox of one branch containing the totality of our service to G-d in which there is but one stem from which three separate myrtles emerge, as will be explained.

[481] See *Or HaTorah, Vayakhel,* p. 2098

[482] *Hemshech V'kacha*, Chapter 87.

[483] See *Pri Eitz Chaim*, *Sha'ar Halulav*, Chapter 3.

[484] *Sukkah* 32b.

[485] See also *Tikkunei Zohar, ikkun* 21(56b).

represent the concept of incorporation in its most perfect form. On the one hand there is a multitude of details, but, on the other hand they are all incorporated within each other.[486]

There can be an added dimension to the above[487] based on my father's[488] notes[489] to *Iggeres Hakodesh*[490] in relation to the day of a *Hilulo*. There he first explains the concept of the *tzadik* who "has left life to the living." He then discusses the concept of "light implanted for the

[486] Although all of the four species represent the idea of unity, there is something unique about the myrtle. Not only does one myrtle have three leaves coming from one stem, but the fact that we need three myrtle, signifies a double unity: three stems from each lave and three leaves bound together.

[487] Concerning the uniqueness of the hadas.

[488] Literally: "My lord, father, master and teacher."

[489] *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak, Heoros l'Tanya* p. 3. Seee there also p. 22

[490] Sec. 27.

righteous"[491] which, he writes, is even a more exalted state than leaving life for the living.[492]

He then cites the writings of the Arizal[493] that the word *lulav* has the numerical value of the word *chaim*-life (68). Now the word *hadas*-myrtle numerically (69) is the same as *chaim* plus one.[494] The word *ohr*-light is the numerical value of the word *hadas* (69) x 3 (207).

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[491] *Tehillim* 97:11.

[492] The *tzadik* that leaves this world generates and leaves two dimensions of his spiritual energy to the world, particularly to his disciples; the first is the spiritual concept of *chaim*-life and the second is spiritual *or*-light. *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak* makes the point here that *ohr*-light is higher than *chaim*-life and that the concept of light here is associated with the myrtle. This reinforces the point made above that the *hadas* is superior to the *lulav*. While the *lulav* is connected to *chaim*, the *hadas* is connected to *ohr*.

[493] *Pri Eitz Chaim, Sha'ar Halulav* ibid.

[494] The technical term for "plus one" in a gematria, mentioned here, is the *colel*, which means the general or encompassing aspect of the word. This refers to a method of gematria where two words share the same

The above suggests that the idea of the "*Ohr*-**light** implanted for the righteous" is higher than the idea of the *tzadik* who "has left ***chaim*-life** to the living." This is because *ohr* is three times *chaim* with an added one for each of the three *chaim*s. This is similar to the three *hadassim* where each *hadas* is equivalent to *chaim* with an added one.

The explanation given there[495] is that a *tzadik* represents the attribute of *yesod*-foundation[496]

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numerical value, minus one. Only when we add one to the word, will they match numerically. This method is called the *colel*. We are not just counting the numerical value of the individual letters, we are also counting the word itself. This usually signifies that the commonality of the two words is only valid when we add the general energy contained in one of the words. In this case, the fact that *hadas* is one more than *chaim*, indicates that *hadas* is greater than the specifics of *chaim*; only when we deal with the general, all-encompassing and unconventional aspect of *chaim* does it match the word *hadas*.

[495] *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak ibid.*

[496] *Yesod* is the sixth emotional attribute and is the Divine power that contains and channels all the other

and has the numerical value of three times *chaim.*[497] They correspond to the traits of *emunah*-faith, *yirah*-reverence and *ahavah*-love[498] that radiate in the attribute of *yesod.*[499] This parallels the status of Yosef, who personified the attribute of *yesod*[500] and who derived his status from all three Patriarchs. Thus the numerical

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emotional attributes into *malchus*-the Divine attribute of speech.

[497] *Tzadik* is numerically 204, which is 3 times *chaim*-68.

[498] These are the primary traits of the *tzadik* discussed in *Iggeres Hakodesh* that the tzadik endows to his followers. These three traits are associated with the theme of *chaim* as explained there.

[499] As stated in n. 94, *yesod* contains all the elements of the higher attributes.

[500] Yosef is referred to as a *tzadik* because of how he resisted the temptation posed by Potiphar's wife. The trait of *yesod,* metaphorically associated with the male reproductive organ inasmuch as it channels the potential for life, is the symbol of the *tzadik.* Hence, the verse (*Mishlei* 10:25): "*tzadik yesod olam*-the *tzadik* is the foundation of the world."

value of the word Yosef[501] is three times the word *ben*-son[502] because he was a son of, and a recipient to, all three Patriarchs.

Based on the above it follows, that the flow of sustenance from Yosef after his passing (for "Yosef is the one who supplies grain to the entire land[503]) manifests itself on two levels: the level of *chaim*-life and, the higher level of *ohr*-light.[504]

One may suggest that this is also the meaning of the verse, "The sun also arises, and the sun goes down and hastens to his place where he arises."[505] The sun's setting is a metaphor for the passing. And when that happens, the sun shines there (the emphasis of the word "there" is explained in the discourses of the Rebbe

[501] Which is, numerically, 156.

[502] *Ben* is numerically 52. 52x3=156.

[503] *Miketz* 42:6

[504] The Rebbe is alluding to the Ba'al Hahilulo whose name is Yosef and who continues to channe; both traits of *chaim* and *ohr.*

[505] *Koheles* 1:5.

Maharash[506]). This suggests that precisely in that situation that the "light implanted for the righteous" shines. This means that there is an increase of Yosef's status, to the extent that "may G-d increase for me another son,"[507] the deeper meaning of which, according to the Tzemach Tzedek[508] is that one transforms an "other" into a "son."[509]

Based on the foregoing that the sprig of myrtle, particularly the three sprigs, represents the three approaches in our general service, which

[506] *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5630 p. 44 *ff.*

[507] *Vayeitzei* 30:24. This was the reason Yosef was so named because of his mother Rachel's prayer that she have an increase ("Yosef") of another son.

[508] *Or HaTorah, Vayeitzei* 220a *ff. Vaychi* 386a-b.

[509] This interpretation retranslates the words "may G-d increase for me another son" as "May there be an increase so that the other becomes a son." This suggests that Yosef, specifically, has the power to transform even an outsider into an insider. This unique power is reserved for Yosef and ties in with the power of the *hadas,* which embodies both the trait of *chaim* and *ohr.*

encompass many details, we can understand the significance of dancing with a sprig of myrtle and especially the dancing with three sprigs. This suggests that all of the specifics of our service must be permeated with the concept of dancing, which signifies holy folly that transcends logic and reason. This is analogous to what was discussed above regarding prayer where one's heightened state of "With You I want nothing" is discernable in all the specific blessings and requests that follow.

VII

Now we can understand why, in discussing the above in detail, he cites all the particulars of the story in the Talmud, Tractate Kesubos. First he cites the behavior of R. Yehudah son of R. Ila'i who would take one sprig of myrtle and dance with it...

The meaning of this citation will be understood by first identifying this Sage. There is a rule (cited by Rashi[510]) that whenever the Talmud

[510] *Shabbos* 127b – derived from *Bava Kamma* 103b.

refers to a "certain chosid"[511] it refers to either R. Yehudah ben Bava or R. Yehudah the son of R. Ila'i. His piety expressed itself in the manner by which he served G-d and was exemplified by his taking a sprig of myrtle and dancing with it. The emphasis here is on one sprig, to underscore that notwithstanding the three leaves that grow from the stem, it is still only one sprig.[512]

This serves as a metaphor to prayer where all of the specifics of prayer are experienced in a manner expressed in the verse "With You I desire nothing."[513]

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[511] The term chosid-pious in the Talmud refers to one who goes beyond (or: within) the law, either within the realm of MItzvos between man and G-d or man and man.

[512] This highlights the concept of unity informing and permeating the multiplicity. In other words, R. Yehudah was able to see through the appearance of division to see true unity. He was totally unaffected by the multifarious nature of the world around him.

[513] No matter how many personal requests we make in prayer we are totally unaffected by these needs and are devoted to being one with G-d.

This approach is also represented by the concept of chassidus-piety, as Tanya[514] cites the words of *Tikkunei Zohar*[515] concerning a *chosid*: "Who is a *chosid*? He who is benevolent with his Creator; with his nest…[516] like a son who exerts himself for his father and mother, whom he loves more than himself… and who sacrifices his life…"[517] He doesn't think about himself at all. This attitude is one that transcends logic.

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[514] End of Chapter 10.

[515] Introduction (p. 1b.)

[516] It is a play on words. *Kono* can mean Creator and can also mean nest. The import of this retranslation is that the *chosid* seeks not a **personal** relationship with G-d, his Creator, but wants to fulfill G-d's will in making the world a dwelling for G-d—G-d's "nest." The import of this is that the *chosid* has no interest in any personal gain, not even the loftiest spiritual experiences inherent in getting close to G-d. All the *chosid* cares about is to fulfill **G-d's** will in making our physical world a dwelling place for Him. This totally selfless approach goes beyond the limits of rationality and is an expression of holy folly.

[517] *Zohar* III (*Raya Mehemna*) 281a.

R. Yehudah the son of R. Ila'i's lived in a generation about which it was said, "The early ones were like angels."[518] From his exalted perch his attitude was transmitted, [albeit, with some variation,] also to the generation of Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitzchak who lived in the later period of the *Amoraim*.[519] In his situation he would dance with three sprigs. In addition to the fact that each sprig is divided into three leaves, this dynamic manifested itself in three separate sprigs. Notwithstanding the existence of three sprigs they were all unified in the holy folly experience of a dance, all of which was due to the influence of R. Yehudah the son of R. Ila'i who would dance with one sprig of myrtle.

[518] Based on the words of our Sages in Tractate *Shabbos* 112b, according to the version of *Tosphos, Chulin* 5b s.v. *tzadikim*. The "early ones" refers to the period of the *Tana'im*, the Sages quoted in the Mishnah, as opposed to the *Amoraim*, the Sages quoted in the Talmud..

[519] About which it was said, "If the early generation were like angels then we are like humans..."

This dynamic was extended further yet to a subsequent generation, as is indicated by the continuation of the story: "R. Zeira said, the venerable sage [or: old man] is embarrassing us." Calling him "venerable sage" implies that he [R. Zeira] was in the next generation. Even in that next generation Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitzchak's influence of dancing with three sprigs was still evident. (His influence was, in turn, a consequence of R. Yehudah the son of R. Ilai's dancing with but one sprig.)

His actions were not just dancing in "middle of the day,"[520] but rather in a manner that "embarrassed us."[521] Embarrassment is a function

[520] "Middle of the day" implies that the dance is one that is accompanied with unmitigated love and joy. This was indeed the approach of Rav Shmuel ben Rav Yitzchak and his forebears. However, in the later years of R. Zeira, only a lower level dance was extant; one that is motivated by the inferior trait of yirah-awe, which is associated with embarrassment.

[521] Perhaps the Rebbe is reinterpreting the word for embarrassment used by R. Zeira "*machsif.*" This term is also used to describe the beginning of nightfall in the

of yirah-awe[522] and reflects the effects that it had on the behavior (of each and every Jew according to his state) that lasted throughout the day; the influence of holy folly was discernable.

The Talmud concludes:

When he [Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitzchak] passed away, "a pillar of fire appeared, separating him from all those who were near him." The fact that everyone could see this pillar of fire indicates that his influence had an effect on the entire world. And, simultaneously, they realized that this was an extraordinary and unconventional phenomenon. This explains the usage of the words, "a pillar of fire **separated**." The word separated implies that it is phenomenal, beyond the conventional divisions of the world. It is only

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Talmud (*Shabbos* 34b) "*hichsif*" and is translated as "darkened." R. Zeira was influenced by the holy folly of his predecessors, albeit in a lessened "darkened" state, one of nightfall-embarrassment-*yirah* as opposed to daytime-*ahavah.*

[522] See *Tanya*, Chapter 4 (8a). *Iggeres Hakodesh,* end of sec. 15. *Likkutei Torah, Nitzavim* 51d. et al.

that through his conduct he revealed this to the world at large.

The foregoing distinction between the early and later generations[523] can be found analogously in the service of each and every individual. This is the difference between the way things are rooted in their source at the beginning of the day's service and the way it is manifested after prayer. During prayer, one experiences the feeling of "I am always with You," which transcends reason and logic. After prayer, "one goes from the synagogue (the House of Prayer) to the *Beis Hamidrash* (the House of Torah study)"[524] to engage in Torah study which engages the mind

[523] I.e., the difference between the generation of R. Yehudah the son of R. Ila'i where only one sprig was used to indicate the utter unity he expressed, and the three sprigs of Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitzchak, which suggest that the unity is not s pronounced and has been introduced into a world of division.

[524] End of *Berchos, Shulchan Aruch, Admor Hazaken, Orach Chaim* 155:1. One must go straight from morning prayers to the House of Study to learn Torah before engaging in one's personal activities.

and is subject to rational comprehension. This is especially true with respect to the Oral Torah. One may recite the blessings for Torah study only when one comprehends the Oral Torah (in accordance with the ruling of the *Magen Avraham*,[525] cited by the Alter Rebbe in his *Shulchan Aruch*[526]).

This is then followed by the details of one's activities throughout the day. [All of which are influenced by the initial transcendent feeling of being with G-d in prayer.]

This is essentially what the Rambam wrote:[527] "A *chochom*-wise person is discerned by the way he eats and drinks.... This means that even when one eats and drinks one can tell that he is a *chochom*, with the emphasis on the word

[525] *Orach Chaim*, 50:2.

[526] *Hilchos Talmud Torah*, end of Chapter 2. As opposed to the recitation of the Written Torah, where no comprehension is necessary to qualify as Torah study and the required blessing before such study.

[527] *Hilchos De'os* 5:1.

chochom, which is more than *meivin* and *yode'ah*,[528] as the difference between *chochma, binah* and *da'as* is explained in several places.[529]

To encapsulate all of the above:

The Rebbe Rashab, in his discourse[530] on the words "*Atem Nitzvaim Hayom*-You are all standing today... all of you."[531] The words "all of you" have been interpreted by the Alter Rebbe[532]

[528] These two terms describe those who are endowed with superior *binah* or *da'a*s, two of the three intellectual faculties. *Binah* is the ability to draw inferences or take a seminal point and elaborate on it. The person endowed with *da'as* has the ability to connect to an idea in ways that affect his emotions. The *chochom*, however, possesses a more abstract mode of seeing things that cannot be articulated. They are in a certain sense, supra-rational.

[529] See preceding note.

[530] See end of discourse s.v. *Atem Nitzavim* 5672 (*Hemshech Te'arev,* Volume 1 p. 126. 5675, Volume 2, end of 1139*ff*).

[531] *Nitzavim* 29:9-10

[532] *Likkutei Torah,* beginning of *Nitzavim*

as an expression of absolute and unmitigated unity. Then, the Torah proceeds to enumerate the specific categories of "Heads of your tribes" through the "woodchoppers and water carriers."

The difference between these two sections of the verse parallels the difference between the "acceptance of the yoke" on Rosh Hashanah, where the Mitzvah of the day is Shofar,[533] and the "acceptance of the yoke throughout the year. On Rosh Hashanah the focus is on the service reflected in the words "all of you together."[534] During the rest of the year, the focus is on the varied levels of "your heads" though the "woodchoppers and water carriers" within each person:[535] The "heads" as it relates specifically to one's service and the "water carriers" as it relates

[533] *Mishnah, Rosh Hashanah* 26b.

[534] On Rosh Hashanah the sensation is that there is no division because one is in close proximity to the overarching presence of G-d in relation to which everyone is equal.

[535] The focus is on our individuality and the varied and individual faculties we all possess.

specifically to one's service. The unifying concept represented by the words "all of you together" remains in a latent state.

Within each day's service the above parallels the "acceptance of the yoke" as it is experienced in the *Shemoneh Esrei* prayer (as explained in Tanya[536]) and, by contrast, the "acceptance of the yoke" that extends from the prayer throughout the entire day, within all of the specific categories of the "heads" and "water carriers" within each individual as they pertain to our service.

VIII

Based on the above,[537] we can also elucidate why the Discourse cites three versions [concerning R. Zeira's reaction to the pillar of fire that

[536] Chapter 39.

[537] That the general thrust of our service to G-d must be followed by extending the inspiration to the particulars.

separated between Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitzchak and everyone else]:

> "The venerable sage has been well served by his sprig" (*Shot-ie-ah*), ('the sprig of myrtle with which he used to dance' Rashi).
>
> Another version: "The venerable sage has been well served by his folly" (*Shtusay*), ('for he clowned like a fool' -- Rashi).
>
> A third version: "The venerable sage has been well served by his policy" (*Shitosay*), ('by his customary course of conduct' (Rashi).

There is a pattern here:

In the first version, the emphasis is on holy, supra-rational folly as it is restricted to action; he danced with the sprig of myrtle.[538] In this mode,

[538] His folly was limited to an action he performed. There is no indication that it affected his thought processes and other aspects of his life. The next two versions describe how it affected his mindset as well as his conduct throughout the day.

one's understanding and comprehension, when learning the laws pertaining to a Mitzvah, is limited. Similarly, the specific reasons and meditations for each Mitzvah is based on limited logic. It is only the action that transcends reason and logic.

This indeed is the primary attitude one must have in the performance of a Mitzvah: the general intent to fulfill G-d's will (as explained in the end of *Ateres Rosh*[539]*),* without regard to the specific character of the individual Mitzvah.[540]

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[539] *Drush l'Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* 53a. 59a.

[540] Each Mitzvah possesses two functions and therefore two thoughts which accompany the observance of any Mitzvah. The first is the general idea that one is fulfilling G-d's will. From that perspective there is really no difference between Mitzvos; they are all G-d's will. There is a second aspect of a Mitzvah: Each Mitzvah possesses a specific function and accomplishes something different from every other Mitzvah. To make the fulfillment of the Mitzvah resonate with us we try to concentrate on and understand the specific dynamics of the Mitzvah. From this vantage point there are no two Mitzvos alike.

The Alter Rebbe expresses this concept in his statement[541] (a similar one can be found in the Guide for the Perplexed as well[542]): "If we were commanded to chop wood, for example..."[543] (however, this terminology calls for further clarification).

The next step, alluded to by the second version, is to introduce this concept into and enable it to permeate one's intellectual realm, whereby even one's intellect, understanding and comprehension manifest themselves in a manner of folly and transcend reason and logic.

This is why, in the second version, he emphasizes the idea of how "the venerable sage has been well served by his folly." In stating this

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[541] *Likkutei Torah, Shelach* 40a. See also *Hemshech 5666* p. 54.

[542] Part III, Chapter 51 in a note. See *Likkutei Sichos, Volume* 21 n.51.

[543] The suggestion here is that even if the commandments made no sense and were futile actions we would still do it because it is G-d's will.

he underscores that his dancing was one of folly. Dancing, in and of itself, though not walking, but going out of boundaries, is not necessarily a mode of service that is considered folly. Indeed, there are forms of choreographed dance, where the movement of the legs correspond to the musical notes.

He thus stresses in the second version, "the venerable sage has been well served by his folly," that the dancing itself was in a mode of folly.

This is then followed by a more advanced state indicated by the third version: "The venerable sage has been well served by his policy" (*Shitosay*), ('by his customary course of conduct' (Rashi). The suggestion here is that the transcendent folly became a part of his policy and routine behavior throughout the day; not only during prayer and Torah study. Rather, in each specific detail of his life one would be able to discern his supra-rational folly. (This is analogous to the expression "Torah is his

profession"[544] which suggests that in everything he does one can discern that his profession is Torah.)

IX

The above represents the general thrust of the chapter [five of the Discourse] that discusses holy folly in the context of the boards of the Mishkan which were constructed out of Shittim wood. The Discourse cites the foregoing passage of the Talmud to show how the expression of holy folly can also be found in the Talmud, the revealed part of Torah.[545]

He also brings all the details of the Talmudic narrative to indicate that it does not suffice for this approach to be executed in a general and

[544] *Shabbos* 11a.

[545] Not only is the concept of holy folly rooted in the esoteric teachings of Judaism, or alluded to in the Psalm quoted above, it is articulated quite clearly in the Talmud. The point made by this fact is that holy folly is not an esoteric and elusive ideal. It is part and parcel of the most revealed an accessible parts of Torah.

peripheral manner. It is crucial that it subsequently extends to and permeates one's specific activities (as explained above at length). Only through this detailed approach can one prevail over and nullify all of the particulars of the folly of the "other side."

This is analogous to the discussion in *Sefer Hamitzvos* of Tzemach Tzedek (the Mitzvah of Confession and Teshuvah[546]), that the confession for sins requires saying a litany of sins following the entire alphabet to cut off all of the sources of sustenance of the forces of the "other side."[547]

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[546] End of Chapter 1 (38b)

[547] The Hebrew Alphabet is more than just human instruments of communication. The Hebrew letters and words are Divine instruments responsible for all that exists. By reciting 22 words of confession, each beginning with another letter of the Alphabet, one is thereby uprooting the spiritual negative energy generated by sins. This, the Rebbe states, can serve as an analogy for the detailed citation of the Talmudic story. By focusing on all the particulars, one can unleash detailed positive energy ("holy folly") to neutralize the detailed negative energy (folly of the "other side.")

Once this is accomplished, one must then elicit a renewed light even as far as eliciting "a pillar of fire that separated him from all those who were near him." This separation implies that there was a gulf between himself and the entire system of *hishtalshelus*[548] that he transcended.

This[549] prepares us for the Messianic Age. As explained at length in subsequent chapters of the Discourse concerning the squandering of the treasures during wartime. The treasure is the "infinite light that rises above in an unlimited way and endlessly extends below."[550]

[548] The term *hishtalshelus* describes the chain of worlds and levels beginning with the Divine worlds that followed the *tzimtzum,* G-d's contraction of His infinite light, and continuing downward until the Creation of our physical world.

[549] The approach of unconventional Holy folly and the renewed light it generates is a way of preparing us for an unconventional Messianic Era.

[550] See *Tikkunei Zohar,* end of *Tikkun* 57. *Zohar Chadash, Yisro* 34c. See also *Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun* 19.

All of this extends below "ten handbreadths,"[551] in our reality, so that it can be seen with eyes of flesh until such time that we will once again have the Divine Presence reside in the lowest of realms as it was at the beginning of Creation.

Our actions and service during the period of exile enhances these achievements and endows them with greater force and strength, "double power,"[552] because it involves the service of Teshuvah.[553] Indeed, Moshiach[554] "will lead the righteous to Teshuvah."[555] And, "Israel will do

[551] A Talmudic expression the Rebbe used frequently do connote the idea that the Divine revelation does not remain in a spiritual realm but will literally be present within the confines of our physical world.

[552] Expression borrowed from *Iyov* 11:6.

[553] See *Shemos Rabbah* 46:1.

[554] The process of Teshuvah is specifically connected to Moshiach. Even the righteous who have not sinned would be lacking the power and benefits of Teshuvah. Moshiach will rectify that lacuna.

[555] *Likkutei Torah, Rosh Hashanah* 58d. *Ha'azinu* 85b. *Shemini Atzeres* 92b. *Shir HaShirim* 45a, 50b. This

Teshuvah and they will be redeemed immediately."[556] This will happen, literally, in the near future!

concept has been elaborated on in the talk of *Acharon shel Pesach* , 5694 (*Likkutei Dibburim,* vol. 1, p. 146a*ff.* See also *Zohar* III, 153b.

[556] *Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah* 7:5. In this quote, the Rebbe is stating that Teshuvah is the catalyst for the Messianic Era. In the preceding quote the intent was to show that without Teshuvah something is missing and therefore the righteous would be deprived if Moshiach would not endow them with the power of Teshuvah as well.